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THE CHURCH OF TO-DAY

JOSEPH HENRY CROOKER

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Maria Tinker.

THE CHURCH OF TO-DAY

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A PLEA

By JOSEPH HENRY CROOKER

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THE CHURCH OF TO-DAY

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I THE PROBLEM

THE most urgent problem in the religious world to-day is not the revision of the creeds of Christendom, nor the restatement of ancient theological doctrines, nor the reconciliation of faith and science. All these things are important, but far more important is the question: How shall we create and spread abroad widely among men a clearer understanding and a deeper conviction of the need and worth of the Christian Church as an institution?

The progressive men in all denominations realize that religious beliefs ought to be modernized. This age needs to do just what the fourth and the sixteenth centuries did; that is, affirm its vital convictions in terms of present life. It ought to make a working statement of religion on a level with modern knowledge and in harmony with modern sentiment. This can be done without any loss to vital piety. In fact, nothing essential would vanish from piety by such a process, while much that is fundamental in all faiths would come into new prominence and greater vigor. The vital truth, long wrapped up and obscured in traditional

phraseology, needs to be reclothed in a new language that will appeal to the minds and the hearts of the people of to-day.

The essentials of Christianity have not been outgrown, but they ought to be detached from many crude notions that have long obscured them or diverted attention from them. The present demand is not so much for "creed revision" as for *creed subordination.* All intelligent followers of Jesus are coming to understand that the religious life is larger than any doctrinal system, and while a Confession of Faith may be serviceable to many persons, nevertheless practical Christians have learned to find its true value in what it does to enlarge our common religious life, rather than in what it accomplishes by maintaining a mere uniformity of opinion.

The warfare of science and theology is now seen in a new light. It is not a deadly combat in which one or the other must be defeated or destroyed. It is a constant and growing readjustment, with modifications on both sides, by which religion gains a surer footing and a wider horizon, while science becomes an associate with piety in a diviner art of life. Religion has ceased to fear science, and science has ceased to hate religion; each has changed its attitude toward the other, and both recognize that they are coordinate agents whose essential purpose is the same: to serve man and glorify God.

All this work of purification and readjustment is now in progress with the approval and by the cooperation of eminent leaders in all the great historic

churches. The movement is swifter and wider than many realize; all the more effective and beneficent because quiet and peaceful. Many crude notions respecting the religious life are rapidly being outgrown; not loudly derided, but silently abandoned as so much useless baggage. There is an expansion of vital principles and a shrinkage of mere appendages, and the result will be a new faith: old in its heart-throbs, but new in its mental vision; old in its truly evangelical temper, but new in its intellectual equipment. The changing emphasis of present religious teaching brings into prominence once neglected truths of the gospel in such a way as to make that gospel a new and more powerful evangel.

The progress here indicated may be measured in two ways: —

In the first place, by the practical abandonment in preaching of the more metaphysical elements of the historic creeds, the fine-drawn speculations which float like a detached web at quite a distance from the daily life of man, and which are foreign to the gospel of Jesus and never helpful to the heart of piety.

In the second place, remarkable progress is being made by a new and more discriminating use of the Bible as a book of life for the creation of character; by a psychological interpretation of religious experience which gives us a firmer basis for piety and a wiser method of training in spiritual things; by a clearer tracing of the presence of God in all of life, which turns us away from the profitless discussion of his mysterious decrees to the moral em-

phasis and spiritual gladness to be found in the consciousness that we live, move, and have our being in the divine Father; and, most of all, by the deepening appreciation of Jesus as a Master of the Spirit, whose divinity is no less because stripped of some of the mysticism long associated with his name, and whose humanity has become far more real and helpful because present religious teachers consider it less remote from us than formerly.

The needed religious reconstruction is now in progress, but this is not the great problem in the religious world to-day. That problem pertains to the Church. The friends of piety have been concerned for years with creed revision, with the assaults of science upon faith, with revolutionary discoveries respecting the Bible, but they have failed to realize sufficiently the importance of the Church as the vital institution of religion. The reconstruction of theology advances, but public interest in the Church lessens from year to year. A new faith begins to appear, but the old Church is declining. Much has been heard about putting new truth into the message of the pulpit, but very little has been said about the importance of having a new loyalty to the Church. Thousands profess a new faith in God, but who pleads for the Church of God?

Here is the supreme problem: How to make this age realize the importance of the Church. Of what use to revise the creed unless we have a stronger Church than exists at present to impress that creed upon people and make it a vital principle in their

lives? Of what use to work out a harmony between science and religion unless we provide an institution through which and by which the new conviction may be made effective in the world? Of what use to open the New Bible unless we have a new interest in the Church which shall see to it that the plea for righteousness in the Old Testament, and the command to love in the New, shall be made fruitful in the lives of men? Of what use to have a new thought of God unless we make some large and commanding application of it through the Church, so that our own life shall be purer and the lives of the people of the community nobler? And for all this application of the thought of God, we need the Church of God, — its uplifting worship, its chastening prophecy, its spiritualizing services.

Of what use to grow into the truer and nobler appreciation of Jesus of Nazareth — feeling the creative influence of his life and accepting the commands of his gospel — unless we do something to make the spirit of Jesus prevail on earth? And how make that spirit regenerate human lives, unless we avail ourselves of the Church, where that spirit is created, conserved, and communicated?

It is certainly doing a great deal when we put ourselves as individuals into the strait and narrow way of life. But to do that and stop is to begin to die! What we have we must share, if we are really to live. And to share these great things, to live them in the best manner even for ourselves, to enlarge them and multiply them, we need the

Church. That is what it is for: the spiritual life in common.

It is just here that thousands of good people are at present making a most serious mistake. They throw off what they call the crudities of the ancient creed, and they feel that they have escaped from the bondage of the letter into the freedom of the spirit. But what next? They march out of the Church with their new faith, and do nothing for it or with it! When they have thrown away what seems to them the mere husk of the faith long associated with the Church, they take the kernel, put it in their pocket, and turn their back upon the Church!

But if the old faith with its imperfections needed a Church through which to work and bless the world, how much more is a Church needed in order to incorporate the larger faith of the present into life! Nothing is more unreasonable or more harmful than to desert the Church when one has rejected some minor dogma in its confession. Surely, a larger faith needs a stronger Church as its tool or servant; and the outgrowth of the imperfections of a creed ought to inspire all manly souls to see to it that the Church is still more loyally supported than ever before; and also, they ought to insist that it be made to represent the real faith now held by those who attend it.

But it seems to be the fashion of the hour to find in the expansion of religious thought an excuse for a sad neglect of the Church. The man who listens to the exposition of the Bible from the point of

view of the new scholarship ought to feel: All this must find expression in the Church, and the Church is now more needed than ever before in order to make this truth more effective in human lives. Instead, what actually happens is usually this: he gives up his pew in the Church and takes to the woods!

The man who learns that science, while discrediting some ancient notions long associated with piety, does really make clearer the everlasting reality of religion ought to feel: The Church is now more needed than ever before to make essential piety a greater power among men. Instead, he acts as though the ministry of religion had come to an end, for he forsakes the Church, apparently thinking that it is serviceable only to those who are still enslaved to tradition.

The man who rediscovers Jesus of Nazareth and comes to love him with a new appreciation and a purer affection ought to feel that the Church, as an organized embodiment of his spirit, is of supreme importance to the individual and to the community. Instead, what he often does is to condemn the Church for being such a poor representative of the gospel. While a nobler conception of Jesus ought to lead people to work all the harder to put the Church where it could serve humanity more successfully, it frequently happens that the actual outcome of so-called advanced views about Jesus is just the opposite. The great majority of those who to-day boast that they have outgrown the old superstitions about Jesus, and have reached a truer inter-

pretation of his life and message, actually discard the Church, as also outgrown. Socialists all over the world are shouting, "Up with Jesus, but down with the Church!" It is to be feared that these people do not in reality have the spirit of Jesus; for it is the spirit of Jesus to work for others, and the Church exists for just this purpose: to pray and to labor for the life in common in the spirit of Jesus. And the saner Socialists will soon see this.

We hear it said, in depreciation of the Church, that Christ founded no Church, implying its inferior rank because not directly the product of his efforts. But such views are not true to fact. The new life which Jesus created in his disciples necessarily organized the Church to honor him and to foster the new life that he had created. To continue as his disciples, they must love and serve men; and to love, serve, and train men in the spirit of Jesus, their Master, they had to have the Church as a method or instrument by which to carry on their mission to the world. So Jesus did really found the Church, because he created the new life that actually organized it.

And if the new life, created by the spirit of Jesus, did, in those days, need the Church as a means of expression and as a method of redemption, surely the need is just as great to-day. The more we outgrow ancient errors about Jesus, the more we need a Church to incarnate our new view of Jesus and to foster our new love of him. The more fully we possess the spirit of Jesus, the more

we ought to strive to make the Church an effective agent of that spirit.

The most urgent problem, therefore, in the religious world to-day is to make men see and feel the great importance of the Christian Church. When this is clearly seen and keenly felt, then all else will follow. Until the need of the Church is more fully realized, what is being attempted in other lines of religious work will fail to reach the largest success or do the greatest good.

For instance: there are those who hold that a more elaborate service is the one thing that will do more than all else to interest people in religion. They plead for an enrichment of worship, a more esthetic ritual, a multiplication of forms and symbols, a larger use of music. And this tendency finds increasing expression all about us. Much has already been accomplished along these lines in many churches and by various denominations.

Whatever can be done to deepen and expand the devotional life of the Church most certainly ought to be done. Protestant worship, in the main, has been excessively severe, and often quite lacking in attractiveness and impressiveness. There are comparatively few congregations in America at present that seem to be actually engaged in the worship of Almighty God: the absolute silence; the complete surrender to an overpowering sense of awe, majesty, and wonder; the solemn ecstasy of uplifting reverence for an Infinite Presence that fills all and chastens all — how seldom do we find this in any church! This deep religiousness ought to exist

everywhere. It may exist in the smallest and plainest meeting-house. If it does not exist, the service of the Church has largely been a failure.

In passing, it may be stated that many things now done to enrich the service are really destructive to true devotion: the obtrusiveness of organ and organist; the florid and showy music; the variegated raiment of quartet or chorus; the tendency to make the collection a performance; the unending stream of distracting notices, or the constant flutter of parish programs and papers in the pews, — all these things, so secular and so sensational, are calculated to make a devout man profane!

The need of a more impressive service is, indeed, great. In a period of vexatious theological unrest, like ours, the importance of worship is paramount, for it is by worship rather than by doctrine that many troubled souls can be held loyal to a spiritual faith. And yet the greatest thing, after all, is a wider and deeper realization of the supreme need of the Church. People must be brought to the sanctuary before they can be led in worship. Of what use is the elaborate ritual if there are few present to participate in it? And to move men to church attendance most effectively, they must first be made to have a deep interest in the Church as an institution. If this exists, if they appreciate the Church and love the things for which it stands, all else will follow.

But how difficult to induce people to become regular attendants, if appeal is made only to their curiosity or their love of what is spectacular! And

how impossible to make those who are merely curious really worship, when in the pews! They may be attracted for a few Sundays by the novelty of some peculiar sensationalism, but only genuine piety will hold men permanently, and only the religious spirit will enable them to join heartily and understandingly in a service that represents and creates true devotion. To try to entrap the indifferent and make them religious by indirect and secular attractions, secularizes the Church without saving souls!

It is probably true that a more impressive ritual would be helpful to many of our Protestant churches. But various forms and symbols will be equally helpful and effective, provided the people present in the different churches where they are used are equally impressed with the devotional spirit. The chief difficulty is that so many of our people do not enter the Church in the mood of worship. They have to be warmed up to it *after* they arrive. How hard for a minister to lead a congregation in prayer that has not brought any prayerfulness to the sanctuary! How impossible for the choir to chant the Lord's Prayer so as to make a congregation feel the presence of God, when the people entered the church door without any thought of God! To have a more worshipful congregation, men and women must start from home on Sunday morning in the spirit of worship. To have a more impressive service every person, on taking his seat in the pew at the beginning, must have a heart deeply impressed with reverence for God. Then

how easy for the minister to conduct worship! *The devout hearts are at hand* ready to be led in prayer and praise.

In this connection, it may clearly be seen that a quickened appreciation of the importance of the Church itself will do more than anything else to increase the impressiveness of its service. The people who have little interest in the Church, who do not see and feel its value — they are not material of which a worshipful congregation can be made. Those who do not recognize its transcendent worth are not easily made to pray when you get them inside the church walls. But hearts that love the Church, that realize what it is worth to themselves and their families, that have sacrificed for it and found their greatest joys in it — they will make an impressive service, even if the walls are bare and the forms meager.

If we are to enlarge and enrich the devotional life of a congregation, we must begin farther back than phrases of the liturgy or postures of the body. We must first have hearts all aflame with the spirit of religion. And more important than form or symbol is the living conviction that the Church is an institution of God, indispensable for the training of men in godliness. A larger love for the Church, and a nobler worship will necessarily follow.

One other point needs to be briefly considered in this connection. There are many noble-spirited men and women to-day, who feel that the most pressing demand in the religious world is the federation of the churches. They point to the waste of

spiritual energy and the duplication of ecclesiastical machinery due to sectarian rivalry. They make it plain how the cause of Christ is put to shame and seriously weakened by the unnecessary divisions among his followers. This is deeply felt by missionaries in foreign fields, and they are co-operating with one another more extensively than the home churches which they represent, — and one of the most beneficial reflex influences of foreign missionary work is this demand which it is making for the unification of Christendom.

These advocates of church federation also call attention to the fact that the evil forces of the world have banded together into compact and comprehensive organizations, and the only way for Christians to overcome these allied enemies of society, is for the churches to forget their petty differences and concentrate every soldier of the cross in one supreme effort to make the gospel more effective in human life.

All this is both true and important. The call of the twentieth century to the churches is this: Simplify your message and unite your forces. No earnest Christian should stand apart from any other followers of Jesus on account of differences of belief respecting non-essentials. No mere speculative dogma should separate one Christian from another in the battle for righteousness. It is more necessary to help the soul that sins or suffers than to assert our peculiar notions about metaphysical subjects. The various bodies in the religious world ought to appreciate one another more than at pres-

ent, and the different churches ought to cooperate toward common ends more than they do. God's army is marching in too many disconnected divisions under too many petty flags. Denominations need not disband, but they ought to work together. Love of Jesus ought to be a sufficient passport for every soldier of the Cross; that alone ought to make him welcome in every camp and at every altar. Religious destitution has fallen upon many towns and villages because there are too many churches in them. They are all necessarily weak and therefore inefficient. In other places religion has no masterful influence, not because churches are too small or too numerous, but because they are too indifferent or antagonistic to one another.

Church federation is, therefore, an urgent need. But there is a greater need than even this: A clearer recognition of the worth of the Church itself. We must go farther back and deeper down to touch the fundamental problem. It is important that churches cooperate; but it is more important that we have strong churches to cooperate! It is well to lessen the sectarianism within the churches, but it is better to lessen the indifference outside toward the Church in general. It is a step forward to lead all denominations to appreciate one another, but it would be a far greater advance toward the kingdom of heaven, if we could secure the enthusiastic support of the whole community for the Church as an institution that is helpful to every other human interest.

To unite even weak churches in a common effort

for the betterment of mankind is indeed a decided gain; but it would be a far larger gain to turn weak churches into strong churches, by making men see and feel that the Church is indispensable to civilization. It is good to mass the scattered regiments, but it is better to fill up their ranks with stalwart recruits. Federate the churches? Yes; by all means! But back of that, and vastly more important, there must be a wide, deep conviction among the people in general that the Church is a supreme necessity.

II RELIGION GROWS, BUT THE CHURCH DECLINES

THE two questions: Are people becoming less religious? and, Is the Church losing its hold upon people? are not identical but dissimilar. We may at the same time answer *No*, most emphatically to the first, while we may say *Yes*, with equal emphasis, to the second. If we measure human life by certain standards of intelligence, sympathy, and kindness, it seems clear that people have become more religious in recent years. Moreover, there is a great deal of genuine religion in the world to-day which finds no expression in or through the Church — a misfortune both to the Church and to the world.

Much of the most fruitful religious work is done at the present time outside all ecclesiastical organizations. Reference is here made especially to those practical pieties that are particularly humanitarian in spirit and aim. But the situation is unfortunate for both parties. By this exodus of people from its pews, the Church is crippled; and, on the other hand, this outside work is often less effective because destitute of definite religious association and sanction. As a result of the widening chasm between the Church and the world's work, human life lacks unity; religion fails to receive its

due share of attention or to bestow its needed blessings, while human helpfulness is cut off from its deepest spiritual rootage. It is also a grave question how long these "outside pieties" will endure, if they are kept independent of religion, and the Church is allowed to become weak and ineffective. In the ideal situation, all of life receives inspiration from religion, and everything in life contributes to religion — no activities without religious sanction, and nothing in religion that stands apart from life. The contention is not that the Church become a mere conglomerate of philanthropic machinery, but that the relation between piety and philanthropy become more intimate and vital; both standing on their own basis and working by their peculiar methods, but each receiving inspiration and cooperation from the other.

A great many people have, in recent years, dropped out of the Church, because they are not interested in the things which the Church represents; also, because the things which do seem most vital to them find no place in the Church. This may be wholly their fault, but the condition is obvious and prevalent. Moreover, many people have left the Church, in order, as they think, to be more religious. They calmly tell us (and they are not a few): "We are outside, not because we are irreligious, but because we have found a larger faith and a more practical work for human good." There is probably some ground for this feeling, for many religious teachers have, unfortunately, by their opposition to recent discoveries in science,

Scripture, and history, driven into exile from the sanctuary many intelligent people. It is also true that certain ancient ecclesiastical forms cannot serve as adequate means for the expression of the mighty humanitarian sentiments which so completely fill and so profoundly stir modern hearts. All this is probably an inevitable, though a deplorable, feature of the remarkable transition through which we are now passing.

The misfortune is that people fail to do in religion what they swiftly accomplish in every other department of life. When a particular tool, method, or agency anywhere else in life is outgrown, men do not stop using tools, or treating diseases, or living in houses. They at once provide something better. If a school is inadequate, the children are not allowed to grow up without education. Instead, the school is reorganized, and at once put abreast of the times.

How different with the Church! If its creed seems outgrown or its forms appear antiquated to certain classes of people, they simply march out of it and leave it to die. But why not do for it what is done everywhere else — go to work heroically, as Paul and Luther did — reform the Church, and put it in line with the age?

How can the Church be improved, as it ought to be, for its own sake and the good of mankind, unless those who feel that they are more gifted with the modern spirit insist that it be modernized? Instead of acting as though the Church itself is outgrown, let people remember that only certain per-

ishable opinions and imperfect forms have ceased to be serviceable. What is needed is not progress *away from* religion, but progress *in* religion. The only adequate substitute for a poor church is a better church.

The people with the larger thought and the nobler sentiment, who do nothing to give that new life a suitable and fruitful religious expression, who leave the Church without trying to make it represent the best in themselves, are cravens and cowards who deserve the curse of God and the contempt of men. And in emphasizing the importance of the Church, let us think of it, not as it often is to-day, but as it ought to be, and as it might be, if these very persons would pour their energy, devotion, and treasure into it.

There is no other way by which a man can make what is best in himself such a wide and permanent influence for good in his community, than by throwing himself heartily and vigorously into Church work. If any one is looking about for a means or method by which he may bless humanity, he will find his largest sphere of usefulness, not in some newly organized committee for This or club for That, but in the Church of God. More men at work effectively in the modern spirit for the Church, making it what it ought to be, and many of the evils and sorrows, which now engage the attention of numerous philanthropic enterprises, would cease to exist.

If the Church spoke with sufficient authority, if the many good people, now outside, would put their

very best thought and enthusiasm into it, sweat-shop, deadly tenement, more deadly saloon, starvation wages for shop-girls, cruel child-labor, and many other deviltries would cease to exist. Somebody higher up is largely responsible for these deviltries — the greed of a landlord, merchant, or manufacturer, who must have more money! As a result the tenement is left in bad condition and overcrowded. The shop-girls are ground down to the lowest possible wage. The operatives are poorly paid, and young children are crowded into all places where it is possible to use them.

All these persons try to justify such actions by appealing to "competition." They declare, We have to do these things to meet the sharp competition that now dominates the business world. But there is a good deal of nonsense about this appeal to competition. If their greed were less, if they were willing to accept smaller profits, these things need not be done. It is not competition but avarice that leads men to do these things in a majority of cases — their selfish desire to make ten thousand dollars when five thousand ought to satisfy them. And where is the remedy? A Church that would make these men ashamed of their selfishness and repent of their sin would strike at the root of these grave difficulties that laws cannot reach and philanthropic activities cannot abolish. When religion, through the Church, shall put a "new heart" in these men, then these evils will vanish, and not until then!

More conscience and less greed up higher, and

how vice and misery would disappear on the lower levels of life! Little need for palliative charities, if sufficient genuine piety existed among our leading citizens. All this, and then the whole line will be lifted. *First* a quickened moral sense in the employer, and then he will cease to sacrifice human lives that his profit may be a little larger. *First* an awakened public sentiment, and then the saloon will be driven from power. *First* a revival of the old-time Puritan virtues, — simplicity, sincerity, fidelity, integrity, reverence, — and then a regeneration of human life that will reach both to the highest and to the lowest. *First* a new heart, and then the new coat will come without any help from us. *First* a true repentance, and then the wife will have enough to keep the home. *First* an awakened conscience, and then politics will be purified. This is the chief work in the progress of mankind; and this is the special task of the Church.

The present, however, is a time of stress and strain for the Christian Church. Multitudes of people fail to realize that it has any such important task to perform. Moreover, it faces new problems. It works in the midst of radically changed and changing conditions, — intellectual, social, political, and economic. It finds arrayed on every side competitors that block its way and divert attention from its message and ministry. It is called to fight new enemies and old enemies in a new form. It must carry on its work, and yet at the same time it must reconstruct its methods and revise its teachings, in the face of both indifference and also criticism.

The Church has largely lost its power to correct, coerce, and command. Its old-time warnings, like the ancient guns, are in many cases ineffective, — they are not able to batter down the walls of modern selfishness or beat back the enemies of righteousness. The venerable "proof-texts," on which the creed formerly securely rested, no longer carry conviction to many people; they are themselves now subject to criticism, and even doubt, if not denial. Its once convincing plea for piety, so persuasive with our fathers, is to-day almost lost in the babel of secular noises which leave the soul neither an hour for prayer nor an opportunity for meditation.

Over against the door of the Church are scoffers who call it a blind leader of the blind! They have always been there, but the present crowd is larger and composed of a different class. Multitudes of people, instead of heeding its call to worship, are running in breathless haste after various strange cults that dazzle the eyes of both intelligent and ignorant with promises of mysterious cures and marvelous wisdom. The thoughtful Christian is forced to ask, What is to be the outcome of all this wide-spread indifference and confusion? The earnest citizen is compelled to face and reexamine the question, which is both grave and urgent, What is the real importance of the Church as an institution?

It is easy to make a very optimistic display of facts which seem to show that the Christian religion was never before so strong, popular, or successful

as to-day. We are asked, in proof of this statement, to look at the great world-embracing organizations like the Young Men's Christian Association, the Christian Endeavor Society, the Salvation Army, the numerous and vigorous missionary enterprises, the Students' Volunteer Movement. One glances at these gigantic exhibitions of Christian zeal, and all doubt of the future of Christianity must surely vanish!

The optimist also points to many other features of our present situation for confirmation of his glowing hopes: to the marvelous growth of the sentiment of toleration in recent years — surely an evidence of spiritual growth; to the more fraternal relations between the various denominations; to the transfer of emphasis in preaching from creed to character — to many an auspicious change; to the expansion of the theory of religion, making light of ritual and sect, and centering attention on the good life; to the increase of the appliances of the Church for the application of the gospel. The optimist makes a long list of such favorable appearances and confidently asks, Who can take note of these things and doubt the triumphant progress of the Christian Faith?

It is also very easy for the skilful statistician to mass together figures that seem to show that the world is becoming Christianized at an electric speed: so many more children in the Sunday-school than a hundred years ago; so many more young people banded together for Christ than in the days of the Pilgrim Fathers; so many more missionaries

on foreign fields than in the time of Franklin and Washington; so many more church buildings erected every year in proportion to our population than fifty years ago; so many more institutional churches that really help humanity every day in the week than twenty-five years ago! Is not the list of advancing interests long and glorious?

Now, it is well to be optimistic, if we do not shut our eyes to the other side, and live in a fool's paradise of mere illusion. But may it not be that a good deal of the noise that we hear is the rattle of machinery that actually moves few feet toward the higher levels of conduct and provides little bread of life for the hungry soul? The vital point is not whether there are more church-members in proportion to population than a half century ago, but rather this: Does church-membership really mean what it formerly did? More money is given for missions than a half century ago, but even missionary contributions have not recently increased in proportion to the growth of the country in wealth. Measured in terms of days'-labor or weekly income the average grandson is giving to the Church only a small fraction of what his grandfather gave.

And here attention may well be called to the fact that it is not enough to show that the Church is proportionately as strong as formerly. To meet the needs of the age it must be many times stronger. To show that people can travel as fast to-day as in the age of stage-coaches is not enough. The means of travel must keep pace with the demands of the time.

So with the Church. It is not enough to have a Church that is as vigorous to-day, serving the community as forcefully and completely as in times past, though this in many cases would seem a great blessing. What is needed is a Church that is to-day as far ahead of its predecessor as travel by the railroad is swifter than it was by the stage-coach. Shall everything else outstrip the past, and we be content that the Christian Church, the greatest of all the tools of life, simply be what it formerly was? Shall a people who have more than quintupled their rate of travel over the earth be satisfied to proceed toward the heavenly kingdom no faster than their fathers?

The fact that there are millions of children in our Sunday-schools does seem very encouraging; but do they know their Bibles as well as did John Alden and Priscilla Mullens? It is undoubtedly a good thing to have a Men's Club connected with the Church, but it is not quite clear that it is an adequate evidence of the greater hold of religion upon human life in our time. It did not need a Men's Club to keep the old First Parish in Salem prosperous in 1650, or the Baptist Church in Providence full in 1681. The imposing column of figures from the last census would lead us to think that we are a very religious people. The Sunday suburban passenger service and the gate receipts of Sunday pleasure resorts tell a somewhat different story.

Many of the facts brought forward to prove the increasing prosperity of the Church really refer to

religion in general rather than to the Church itself, and some of them reveal only a change in religious sentiment rather than an actual advance in vital piety. For instance, the spirit of tolerance is much stronger than formerly, but it is questionable whether in many cases what looks like tolerance is after all anything more than indifference. True appreciation of a different faith, real tolerance, is one thing; but apathy toward all faiths due to a lack of interest in all spiritual matters, this is a radically different condition. The first is as beautiful as the second is unfortunate and repellent.

The fact is that many people to-day do not have enough personal conviction in religion to be intolerant. Having no interest in the spiritual life, they are equally indifferent to all faiths; being destitute of every form of creed, they are incapable of intolerance. But such a state of negation has no merit. A man would better be something of a bigot and actually live up to a narrow faith than to have no faith at all. A second-class faith backed by a first-class enthusiasm will do the world more good than a first-class faith backed by a third-class enthusiasm. The mother who declares that she does not particularly care where her children go to Sunday-school — not an infrequent remark — is not a hopeful illustration of religious progress. She does not care, because religion and the Church are not matters of vital concern to her.

Many of the facts brought forward as evidences of the prosperity and power of religion really prove that the Church is declining. The Salvation Army

is a positive religious force, but its presence and prosperity in the world show either that the Church lacks capacity for certain needed services, or that it is destitute, in a way, of popular appreciation and support. If it had been doing all that it ought to have done, and if it were as strong as it ought to be, the Salvation Army would never have come into existence. Many people give liberally to the Army who never support the Church; and the growth of the Army does not as a rule result in any considerable gain in the membership of the Church.

The numerous societies of religious character among young people undoubtedly do a great deal of good. Many of them definitely aim to be auxiliary to the Church. In many cases they probably add numbers to the congregation and strength to the life of the Church. But some thoughtful persons doubt whether they are as helpful to the Church as they seem. They hold the young people together during the adolescent period of social cravings, but is this training as effective in the making of Christian character and church-membership as the older methods of religious nurture? When they reach middle life will they be soldiers of the cross sitting with their families in the church pew? Here is the one supreme test.

Again, appeal is made to the work of social settlements, and similar activities, to prove that religion is not only stronger but more practical than ever before. All these enterprises appeal powerfully to the modern heart, which has become wonderfully sympathetic and tenderly humanita-

rian. No one doubts the value of this work and no one denies its genuine religious character.

But this work does not show that the Church is stronger than formerly, nor does it, as a rule, even make the Church stronger. It is a serious question whether these agencies are even evidences of general religious growth or prosperity. There is social improvement in the neighborhood of a "Settlement," and in this we may rejoice. But the neighboring church is not better attended. It would probably be difficult to find among the people who frequent a "Settlement," many persons who have by it been made to think more favorably of the Church. Moreover, if this work (admirable as it is in many ways) is judged by the old religious standards — repentance of sin, faith in God, discipleship of Jesus, joy in worship, hope of immortality — how much of it can show a positive religious character comparable with the life in the Christian Church?

Let us not too hastily imagine that humanitarian work is necessarily a proof of the prosperity of Christianity. And let us not make the mistake of thinking that a vague, formless, indolent religious sentiment is an adequate substitute for the Church: its word of power, its common worship, its vigorous discipline, in short, its corporate life in the Spirit.

The coming revival of public interest in the Christian Church, so much needed, will come, can only come, from a deepening sense of its worth to the individual and to the community. When men shall realize that the things for which it stands are

precious, vital, essential, then the day of its rebirth will have come. Make men feel that the Church, and the Church alone, has something to do for human life that is absolutely necessary, and that only comes through its ministry, and then the Church will speak with power and work with effectiveness. It will command men when they realize its paramount worth.

III OBSTACLES IN THE WAY OF THE CHURCH

THE topic under discussion, The Importance of the Church, needs to be approached in the scientific spirit, which means an earnest desire to see the facts just as they are. We must empty our minds of all prepossessions and prejudices. We must, first of all, be neither optimists nor pessimists, neither narrow friends of religion nor caustic critics of the Church, but simply seekers after reality.

If the Church has outlived its usefulness, if it is no longer a needed tool of life, the sooner we accept what is inevitable and stop wasting our substance upon it, the better. If, however, it is clear that the Church is an invaluable institution, and if the facts show that it is in a most prosperous and satisfactory condition, we may well take courage and be glad.

If, on the other hand, we find abundant evidence to prove that its work is impeded by many serious obstacles, and even its very existence menaced by adverse conditions, then we must squarely face the situation and see what can be done to remove these obstacles and change these conditions. The strength of our conviction of the incalculable need and worth of the Church will be the measure of

our loyalty to it and the source of our sacrifice for it.

The agencies and influences at work against the Church are many in number and varied in character. No attempt will here be made to catalogue all these adverse forces; attention will only be called briefly to the most prominent. No effort will be made to explain in detail the reasons why the Church has lost position and power in the modern world. More or less, however, will appear in this line, by way of suggestions, as the facts themselves are given.

And it is not primarily the purpose of this discussion to prescribe remedies for the present defects of the Church, or to point out how its place of authority may be regained and its ministry enlarged, although it is hoped that some helpful suggestions in this direction will be made. The one clear and definite purpose of these pages is to emphasize the importance of the Church, showing how this great fact is now widely ignored, and also showing the inevitable danger and immense harm that issue from the present neglect of the Church.

I. The stress and strain of modern life, social, industrial, and commercial, bring thousands of people to a point of mental and physical exhaustion on Saturday night which makes attendance at church on the morrow seem to them an impossibility. It is a serious question whether our great captains of industry and leaders of society are not the worst desecraters of the Sabbath that the world has ever seen, though they themselves may regularly occupy a richly cushioned pew! In order to

increase their income, many of these men and women make such excessive demands upon those working for them that their Sunday is robbed of its real joys and its best uses.

Probably a majority of these weary workers would go to church if they believed in the Church as much as their ancestors did. Also, churchgoing would probably do them more good than the things that ordinarily occupy their time on Sunday. For churchgoing is one of the most effective forms of recreation, for both body and mind. It is recreation that actually *re-creates;* it sends a man out into the world on Monday morning, not only rested but equipped with new spiritual resources. And yet, as a matter of fact, the condition of utter physical and nervous collapse in which tens of thousands find themselves on Saturday nights does prevent their going to church.

II. Great multitudes of people are precluded from regular church attendance by the fact that a large part of the world's work cannot be stopped on Saturday night, but has to be continued on Sunday. The simpler conditions of a former age have vanished, and our present industrial and commercial movements and enterprises are continuous and world-wide. What vast armies of people have to work during Sundays on steam and electric railroads; in mines, mills, hotels, and restaurants; in telegraph and telephone offices; on board ships and in the mail service; as milkmen, reporters, newsboys, and policemen! The druggist must keep open shop; the dentist must accommodate patients

who have no leisure hour on a week-day; while physician and trained nurse cannot neglect their posts of duty when the church bells ring. Reference is here made only to those who are engaged in what have to be accepted as necessary employments on the Sabbath day. And this vast multitude grows larger from year to year.

III. A great variety of Sunday amusements divert attention from the Church. The wheel, the trolley, the automobile carry thousands of people away from the Church into the country. The cheap Sunday excursions by rail and by boat to numberless resorts are largely patronized. Golf and canoeing have become popular Sunday pastimes in many places. The Sunday theater and the "sacred" concert are well attended.

A few years ago, in America at least, the church was the only respectable public place open on Sundays where people could find contact with other human beings. The alternative was to remain at home, — perhaps in a cheerless room or among distracting noises. But now many other things may be done, some of them intrinsically innocent, and harmful only because they stand in the way of the best use of the Sabbath.

Here it may be noted how curiously the telephone has interfered with church attendance, especially in rural communities. Instead of going to the village church, largely for that sociability which we all crave, the people now have a good talk over the telephone — easier, cheaper, and with no intrusion of a minister to bother one about one's sins!

IV. The minister also has at present a great host of rivals which come swarming into every home from hut to palace: The inexpensive illustrated magazine, so attractive to the eye and to the superficial mind; the Sunday newspaper, so cheap that it seems a lottery prize, so amusing to those who enjoy coarse humor and sensational gossip; also the exciting novellette which costs little money to buy and no effort to read!

Besides these ephemeral products of the press, there are the really good books lying thick upon the table, and pleading to be read; and the only quiet hours of leisure in the week when this can be done are on Sunday morning. How much more agreeable and profitable, many say to themselves, to turn these leaves than to dress up in uncomfortable clothes and listen in bad air to a dull preacher and a rainbow-costumed choir!

Few would probably go as far as a prominent professor in one of our largest universities who recently wrote: "The ordinary Protestant minister, so far as I have seen him, is a decidedly inferior person, and a morning paper, or fishing trip, or baseball game is much to be preferred to anything he can give"!

The really alarming feature in such adverse opinions as this is the fact that they reveal a very low and imperfect conception of the Church. There is here no appreciation of it as a place of worship or as a realm of organized religious life. Such persons apparently think of the Church with sole reference to entertainment and instruction; and

because it does not interest them along these lines its service is condemned as intolerable. But even more alarming than their failure to appreciate the Church is their failure to appreciate *life:* no conception of its larger ethical significance or nobler spiritual possibilities, for the seven devils of Secularity have entered into these souls.

V. The rapid development in recent years of foreign travel and the vacation habit have interposed new and serious obstacles in the way of the Church. Ministers of prominent churches report that they have their leading families at their services during only a few Sundays of the year; they are traveling in Europe, stopping up in the mountains, or spending a season at the seashore. The Church necessarily suffers. Attendance upon it becomes more and more a mere incident in their crowded program of life. Moreover, while they continue to give their money, their personal presence, which is vastly more important, is lacking, — a distinct loss. Even people of small means now take long vacations in the summer. And after eight or ten weeks of careless, outdoor life, how hard to reestablish the churchgoing habit, especially among children and young people!

VI. On the other hand, the modern flat and the apartment house are destructive of interest in some particular church as a religious home. The family which occupies such a place only expects to remain for a short time. So situated, with no stake in the soil, no care for their temporary neighbors, and no interest in the community, — in fact, there is an

aggregation of families, but no real *community*, — it cannot be expected that such people will pay any attention to the local church. They say to themselves: We are only transient campers, without any social interests or business association where we happen to reside for a few months, and why should we bother ourselves about the neighboring church?

When they feel like it, these people go to some down-town church, chiefly for the music, or possibly for a stereopticon exhibition. Usually the more secular the service the more likely they are to attend! This is cheaper and it involves no obligations. As a result, a great army of church tramps has come into existence. And it is surprising, and disquieting, to find how many intelligent and respectable people have fallen into this habit of life. It is really a *fall*, for they have none of the benefits and do none of the good which would come from a living interest in some particular church, however small it might be. This course, so largely followed at present, *is* cheap; it is *too cheap;* it cheapens life on every side. There is no common interest that cheers and strengthens; no burden-bearing that develops and ennobles; no public disciplines that stimulate and refine. It costs little, but it brings nothing of permanent value into their lives!

VII. The multiplication of all sorts of "brotherhoods" makes the work of the Church increasingly difficult. These fraternal organizations undoubtedly do a great deal of good. They often supply what the Church in many instances has so sorely

lacked: fellowship, brotherly attentions in sickness and misfortune, and substantial benefits in case of death. If the Church had done its whole duty in the creation and expression of human kindness, probably it would have kept these people closer within its own fold, and there would have been less inclination to seek for these social aids and gratifications outside its walls.

But these fraternal organizations have recently both multiplied and also grown at a marvelously rapid rate; and they have become, without so intending, a serious rival, if not a decided menace, to the Church. The average man can only give a certain amount of money and attention to any such interest. If largely devoted to a lodge or club, the Church must necessarily suffer. It is probably true that many a man who at present spends fifty dollars cheerfully in some such way, gives ten dollars somewhat grudgingly to the Church. The Church may have his children to educate in the Sunday-school, if very good to them on Christmas and Easter; but instead of paying liberally for this service, he lavishly pours his substance into his secret society. In many places, large and elegant "temples" exist to accommodate these fraternities that abundantly flourish, while the people of the same town worship in small and shabby meeting-houses that are kept open only by the earnest efforts of a few self-sacrificing women!

VIII. In rural communities the Grange has been diverting the life of the people from the Church. It is often the one popular institution of the

countryside. Its "Hall" is large and well kept; larger, as a rule, than any neighboring church. There great crowds frequently gather, on afternoons and evenings, in fair or stormy weather, many families driving for miles in order to attend. Time is willingly given and money is freely spent. The Saturday night entertainment appeals strongly to the young. The fact that it is often called "a blow-out," shows that it is not especially instructive or refining!

The next morning the congregations in the churches of the village are small. When approached on the subject, some will reply: "It is too far to drive to church from our house," and others will explain, "We were up so late at the Grange that we could not get to church." Both statements show into what a subordinate place the Church has fallen in the minds of these farmers. Too far to church, though only half as far as to the Grange! Places that we have no interest in are, indeed, afar off, though in the next street!

Now, no criticism need be passed upon the Grange, when occupying its proper place and doing its specific work. But what can it accomplish for people in comparison with the Church? Can it provide spiritual ideals for boy and girl that will adequately prepare them for life? Can it train a conscience that will enable a young man to resist temptation? Can it equip people with faith in God and hope of heaven? Does it bring sinners to repentance? Does it win disciples for Jesus Christ? Does it develop the moral qualities that

shine in the Sermon on the Mount and that every mother wants to see in the young man who marries her daughter? Are its lessons about butter-making a substitute for the Decalogue ? Is its discussion of fatted cattle as important as a sermon that makes a man ashamed of his sins? Is its lecture on poultry as valuable as the religious experience that wipes away the stains of sin and turns the heart heavenward? Let the Grange prosper, but let no man imagine for a moment that it will do for himself, for his family, or for his community, what the true Church accomplishes for all these interests.

IX. The Woman's Club is an admirable organization, — its field is wide, its interests are practical, its usefulness is great. It has not come into existence with any definite aim to injure the Church, but it is a fact that it absorbs treasures and energies that were formerly given to the Church. Where it was once said, " Mother is at the missionary meeting," it is now said, " Mother is at the club "! And it is obvious that when a woman becomes intensely interested in three or four clubs (eight or ten in extreme cases), her devotion to church work must decrease. This statement is not a criticism of the club movement, but simply the description of an obvious fact which those especially interested in the Church must consider.

In this connection it may well be noted that the world of religious activities is at present in the midst of a reaction against the plan of raising money for the Church by means of bazaars and similar enterprises. Something may be said in behalf

of the church bazaar, but this side of church work has been overdeveloped. Elaborate preparations for a bazaar are in no sense religious work. It is no more *religious* for a woman to make aprons for a church sale than to mend her children's clothes, — possibly not nearly as religious.

Moreover, holding a bazaar is not a normal or essential activity of the Church. The fact that so many bazaars have to be held, in many places, in order to keep the church open and pay the minister's salary is evidence that religion has no vital grip upon men's hearts or pockets. The average man would not allow his wife and daughter to drudge so hard in order to earn money for the church by supper and show, if he really cared for it. No wonder that many estimable women have become tired of all this ecclesiastical *shopkeeping*, and have worthily resolved, We will have a club of our own where we can do something beside cook oysters and make aprons for the cause of the Lord!

X. Certain intellectual conditions of the present age are inhospitable to the Church. A few years ago many eminent divines, unfortunately, took a very hostile attitude toward modern science in general. The doctrine of Evolution and the Higher Criticism of the Bible, in particular, received much condemnation and some abuse at their hands. And very naturally, in losing this battle with science and scholarship, the clerical army has been very much discredited; and in consequence the Church has suffered.

The works of Buckle, Lecky, Draper, and An-

drew D. White have made the story of the warfare of science and theology familiar to the common mind, and many in reading this story have come to hate the Church. People remember how its teachers and leaders persecuted Bruno, Galileo, and many other discoverers, even down to our own time; and, in their keen resentment, they wish that it might disappear and curse the world no longer. It is a sad fact that the Church has a good deal in its own history that makes a black record, and this record is hard to live down.

While science as science is not irreligious, but provides abundant material for the expansion of religion, nevertheless it is true that the spread of scientific information and the habit of thought developed by scientific study do frequently tend to discredit the Church in the minds of many men. The Church has unwisely pushed its claim of authority to an extreme point. On the other hand, by fostering open-mindedness, by leading people to realize that there are no finalities among any of our intellectual interpretations of nature, science has seemed to destroy the so-called authoritative teachings of religion. The habit of scientific inquiry, the temporary attitude of doubt incident to discovery, have apparently discredited some of the old traditional pieties. The Church, unfortunately, has often opposed progress. Meanwhile, science, by demonstrating the need and the benefit of progress, has put the Church in an unfavorable light. The Church has imprudently insisted that certain theories of creation and certain views re-

specting the Bible are essential to religion. As science and scholarship have compelled men to abandon certain old notions (not essential to Christianity), they have also, taking the clergyman at his word, abandoned religion and the Church. All this present discomfiture of the Church ought not to have been brought about, but it is very real and very unfortunate.

It has thus come to pass that a temporary atmosphere has been created in some quarters which is unfriendly to the Church, if not to religion. There is an impression that it is out of place in our modern world. The revelations of science and scholarship have, it is felt by many, destroyed the superstitions upon which it once rested. It is now a moribund survival of a stage of human culture that has come to an end among intelligent people. In an age of steam and electricity, of evolution and culture, there is no longer any need of sermon and prayer, — this is the feeling of many persons who have thought themselves out of the bondage of Tradition, but not into the freedom of the Larger Truth. When men come to feel, as some unfortunately do, that science reveals a universe without God, they soon conclude that there is no need of a Church in such a world. Science has made no such discovery, but our Haeckels have led many to think that it has; and the Church suffers on this account.

XI. Socialism must also be named as a decided obstacle in the way of the Church. Socialists, as a rule, feel that the Church is stricken with death. It is too indifferent to care for the poor or too

weak to help the masses. A considerable part of the fresh and urgent humanitarian sentiment of the age has flowed outside of all ecclesiastical bounds, or, to be more accurate, it has been created outside those bounds; and it works, in the main, with complete indifference to creed and ritual — an evident but unfortunate situation. The Church is not guiltless. It ought to have preoccupied these fields with humane ministries; it ought to have been more hospitable to these modern heart-beats.

But the situation confronts us, no matter who is most to blame. The Church to-day needs *humanizing* even more than it needs *rationalizing*. On the other hand, the Socialists need the Church more than they need larger wages. And if Socialists would contribute some of their energies and enthusiasms to the improvement of the Church, they would really accomplish more than by many of their present methods.

The fact is, however, that minds imbued with the common socialistic theories care little for organized religion. They do not dream of the Kingdom of God; they seek a Republic of Man. But an interpretation of nature too small to include God is too imperfect to save man; a view of duty and destiny indifferent to Jesus is incapable of the highest efficiency in character-making; and a scheme of life more intent on wages than on worship, more ambitious for short hours than for noble service, and more interested in comforts than in conduct, will never satisfy the consciences nor command the hearts of men for any length of time. In

any "new heaven" that may arise on this earth, the Church of God will have a prominent place because man is the child of God, and he cannot long forget or ignore his divine heredity!

Whatever we may think of the socialistic program, there is a very noble side to many socialistic aspirations. There are also among Socialists in general some elements that are profoundly religious: intense craving for progress, intense demand for liberty and opportunity, intense desire for human betterment. But these elements need to be supplemented by historic vision, spiritual insight, and an appreciation of organized religion. To this larger view and better purpose, Socialists will probably come through the widening experiences of the future. The Church needs to exercise a double care at this point: It ought to avoid all harsh and unfair criticism tending to estrange Socialists; and it ought also to resist what is crude and chimerical in their ideals and policies. A wiser and better Church would absorb and utilize much of the humanitarian enthusiasm that has been diverted into Socialism; it would emancipate Socialists from some of their mistakes; and it would win back to itself much of this now alienated social enterprise to the great advantage of its own life and to the good of mankind in general. However, the one fact to be noted here is this: Socialism in its present mood leads many people away from the Church and increases its difficulties.

XII. It is not necessary to stop and point out at any great length the difficulties in the way of the

Church presented by what is called the *commercialism* of the age. This topic presents a complex problem about which very much might be said.

There is a radical difference between "commerce" and "commercialism." One is honorable trade which remembers moral obligations; the other is business controlled by avarice, where profits are sought to gratify low and selfish ends. Commerce, in its best estate, has a noble side and provides precious ethical disciplines. The work of the world, when penetrated by high ideals and guided by moral convictions, is a realm of true excellence and spiritual training. Business on a high level has pieties of its own that make valuable contributions to the religious life.

But when trade drops to mere competitive warfare; when handicraft is divorced from moral excellence; when labor forgets its ethical responsibilities; when selfishness runs riot through counting-room and market-place; and when profits are sought and used only for gross pleasures, — then not only does the soul of man suffer, but business itself loses its highest quality and best fruitage. So far as the world has been *commercialized*, to that extent has the Church been weakened. Men who are living solely for money cannot care for the things of the spirit. Men absorbed in simply "getting" will pay little attention to a gospel that emphasizes "giving" oneself for others. Men intent on mere worldly profits and selfish pleasures do not want to hear about a kingdom based on

self-sacrifice, and built by loving service. The Church can mean nothing to such men. In fact, the Church itself, living in such an atmosphere, has been to some extent "commercialized," and to that extent deprived of power.

Under the stress of this materialism, many men (and even good men too) ask, "What good is the Church doing anyway? We would support it, if we could see practical results. We give to the Salvation Army, because it actually does something. We would give to the cause of religion, represented by the Church, if it would prove its faith by its works."

This is the language of men who have no religious sensibilities; who have lost the habit of worship; whose spiritual life has been choked to death by worldly cares; whose standards of judgment are materialistic. A church means no more to them than a picture-gallery to the blind or a symphony to the deaf. And for similar reasons. In their spiritual infirmity they cannot see the glory of its creations, or hear the songs of its emancipated souls.

When a man asks, What is the use of prayer? he is, in a way, in the same class as those who ask, What is the use of poetry and music? The one is as spiritually dead as the others are defective in esthetic capacities. But all "defectives" prove the need and worth of that which they lack! The Church, which exists largely for worship, does not appeal to the worldly, because they do not care to worship. The Church, which also exists to bring

sinners to repentance, does not interest the materialistic, because they have no consciousness of sin.

The demand is often made that the Church justify its existence *by doing something practical!* This language, so often heard in these days, reveals a misconception of the office of the Church, which is one of the most serious obstacles with which it has to contend. It is a part of the materialism of the time. Those who use it seem to think that the Church is not "doing anything" when it ministers to the spiritual needs of the soul.

But what is more *practical* than the making of a conscience? What is more *practical* than the preparation of a heart by worship to bear a great sorrow or resist a mighty temptation? What is more *practical* than the awakening of a mind to the consciousness of God that brings peace and gives joy? Or what is more *practical* than the deepening appreciation of Jesus, so that his spirit may become the masterful motive of life? To accomplish these things is really to "do something" of supreme value.

The Church has, indeed, suffered from impractical dogmas and fruitless rites. But to win these worldly-minded critics to a loyal support of the Church we must do what has to be done to deaf and blind before they can enjoy music and pictures, — we must open the ears and eyes of their souls. They must begin to live in the spirit before they can appreciate the Church, which exists to cultivate the spiritual life.

If the Church cannot justify its existence as a

place of worship, as an oracle of prophecy, as the representative of religion as a corporate life in the spirit of Jesus, it has no future. As a mere agent of entertainment or instruction, as a doer of secular tasks, it can neither reach these people nor long endure. They never will be won by gastronomical appeals, or musical programs, or creed revision, or elaborate charities. They must be born again, experience religion, and feel the need of worship. The Church can thrive only on the spiritual life that it creates.

IV THE PRESENT SITUATION

THE question now arises, What effect have these and similar agencies and influences already had upon the work and standing of the Christian Church? Every one would like to believe that, as yet, no serious harm has come to this important institution. All friends of religion are anxious to feel that it is making more substantial gains and winning larger victories than ever before. Many of those who realize that organized religion is encountering new enemies in these days, assert that it also has new friends and new advantages that more than balance the adverse tendencies of the age. Others admit that it has to labor harder than formerly to accomplish the same results, but they contend that the Church has better workers and a stronger organization than in any past time. And all these hold that the situation, on the whole, is very encouraging.

What are the real facts? Is it true that the Church is in a satisfactory condition? Is it true that it holds the great masses of men and women as it once held them? The question is not, whether personal faith in God and immortality is as general and as commanding as it once was, but, Do people have the old-time interest in public worship, in what the preacher says, in the cultivation of the religious

life, — in short, in the work of the Church? Would that the facts were more hopeful! Let us note some of those, all too abundant, which show that the Church is losing its hold upon the life of the American people.

I. The decrease of students in our theological schools is exceedingly significant and positively alarming. Attention need here be called only to this one fact: Ten years ago (1898), the number of students in our American divinity schools, of all denominations, was about 4000. If this number had kept pace with our growth in population, there ought now (1908) to be some 4500 divinity students. Instead the number at present is about 3300 — an actual loss of 700 students in a decade, or nearly 20 per cent, while the relative loss is 1200, or 30 per cent! In these years, many unusual inducements have been held out to young men in order to turn them toward the pulpit, — what was formerly unnecessary, — and popular discussion has widely called attention to the need of ministers and the advantages of the clerical calling. But young men are obviously less and less inclined to enter the ministry.

Various reasons have been brought forward to explain this decline in the number of theological students — the skeptical tendencies of the time, the aversion of the modern mind to creed subscription, the decreasing distinction and the lessening influence of the clerical profession, and the present commercialism of life in general. Of one thing we may be sure: This falling barometer of the divinity

schools, revealing a wide area of low spiritual pressure, indicates a long period of unsettled weather in the religious world!

But the chief explanatory fact, deeper down than all other reasons given, is the decrease of popular interest in the Church as an institution. Young men do not enter the ministry, primarily, because the Church does not seem to them, or to the families in which they are reared, to have any great importance. The large percentage of loss in such students is a clear demonstration of the alienation of people from the Church. It has manifestly greatly lost power when it fails to attract a sufficient number of superior young men into its pulpits.

II. The lack of popular interest in theological books points in the same direction. How pitifully small the percentage of distinctly religious books loaned by any public library! It may be explained that the books most truly religious are not put in this class: the writings of Carlyle, George Eliot, and Lowell; of George Macdonald, Morley, and Emerson. It is true that the most religious book is often one that does not deal technically or directly with religion or theology. Moreover, the library percentage of specifically religious books read by the community is, obviously, no adequate standard by which to measure the piety of its people.

But the subject to which attention is now particularly called is something entirely different. The fact is that the members of any one of our great Protestant denominations do not at pres-

ent, as a rule, take any interest in a theological work descriptive of its creed or confession. Denominational publishers all tell the same story: the most eloquent book on the fundamental doctrines of any of our great churches, by the most popular divine in it, would to-day have a very small sale, only a mere fraction of what such books did actually have a half century ago, making due allowance for increase in wealth and membership.

What is the meaning of this condition of affairs? Why this complete neglect of learned and attractive treatises in exposition of the basic faith of the Church, not by the outside world, but by its own members? It may be said, that the creed has been outgrown, and therefore no popular interest in a work about it can reasonably be expected or desired. But it is still the professed Confession of Faith of this particular denomination, and if its adherents had the old-time interest in the Church and believed in its established doctrines, they would still eagerly read a book devoted to such theological topics. But suppose that they do not believe the creed, which is the historic basis of the Church, — what then? If these people were still earnestly religious and deeply interested in the Church, they would see to it that the Confession was at once revised and made so vital and modern that they would really enjoy the study of a work descriptive of it. So the fact that church-members are indifferent to such publications reveals an unwholesome and ominous condition of affairs, no matter whether the doctrines are believed or not.

We cannot escape from the discouraging implications of the startling alternatives, and the importance of the subject justifies some repetition. If the Church were adequately loved and its creed actually believed, the book in exposition of its faith would have a large sale. If, however, its members were deeply interested in the Church, but at the same time did not believe its historic Confession in full, then in that case, being people of ardent sincerity, they would make for themselves a new and vital statement of religious convictions about which they would like to read. But this is not what occurs. The theological books remain unsold, and the creed remains untouched; and indifference to the Church is the only reason that can be given for their apathy!

It is no satisfactory explanation of this situation to contend that theological books deserve neglect because they describe and discuss outgrown dogmas. That may be true, but these dogmas are what the Church still professes to believe! They repose undisturbed in its authoritative documents and they are recited in its solemn services! As long as this condition lasts we have a right to expect that church people will take a keen interest in them, just as we expect a Republican to be deeply interested in the platform of his party. On the other hand, if we grant that they are outgrown, then it follows that, if people were sufficiently interested in the Church, every denomination would very soon have a revised Confession, which would so appeal to heart and mind

that expositions of it would be popular reading. There is no escape from the conclusion: As theological books are unread, and as the creed is still unrevised, therefore we are compelled to infer that even its own members have a comparatively languid interest in the Church as the representative of a system of faith.

III. The present tendency in reference to church papers presents another phase of the same problem. All denominational journals face a shortening subscription list, and, as a rule, a diminishing income. The number of people who subscribe for such papers because of denominational loyalty is constantly decreasing. The so-called "religious" periodicals that are having the greatest financial success become less and less distinctly *religious*. Their success is largely in proportion to their freedom from denominational affiliations.

It is held that the change, so obvious and so wide-spread, is not only inevitable from financial considerations, but that it is highly beneficial to religion and the Church. Many people find in these facts no evidence of any serious loss of interest in the Church Universal, but only welcome proof of the decay of sectarianism. But interest in the Church Universal does not, as a rule, pay any minister's salary or make some particular religious body a power for good in a community. To the keen observer it is evident that as men become readers of the secularized religious press their enthusiasm for a particular church lessens, and their attendance at religious services is less reg-

ular. A certain amount of denominational zeal is more wholesome than a catholicity so wide and so attenuated that it fosters indifference and inaction.

IV. The sensationalism of the modern pulpit is a striking evidence of the decreasing hold of the Church upon the world, too evident to need extended discussion. The flamboyant and sometimes grotesque sermon topics announced in newspapers and on bulletin boards; the obtrusive prominence given to musical programs and performers; the anxious appeals to the public, by all sorts of advertising methods, to hear a certain soloist or cornetist, often practically degrading the minister to the position of a mere scene-shifter; the fiery attacks upon fictitious or remote evils; the use in the pulpit of extreme language or vulgar phrase; the resort to the stereopticon to entrap the thoughtless and the curious; the excited discussion of notorious criminals and public scandals, — these and many other devices, so commonly used, show the waning power of the Church.

There is something radically wrong with both pulpit and pew when such methods so widely prevail. These efforts would not be needed or used if people were profoundly interested in the Church. Ministers would not resort to such means to secure a congregation if they were not put to their wits' end to attract the attention of an indifferent public. When even a prominent church, with beautiful edifice and forceful preacher, can fill the pews only by advertising a celebrated soprano or an "angelic-

faced" choir-boy, the time has come for serious reflection!

This cheapening of the Church is one of the alarming signs of the times. We ought always to bear in mind that nothing will do the work of religion but religion. Piety has never been made plentiful by being made easy. Sensationalism is not the way to spirituality; and the strength and glory of the Church consist in what it does to spiritualize the ideals and the habits of the people. Trying to make the Church attractive by making it worldly will never enable it to conquer the world: the task that it must perform and the test by which it must be judged. Inducing men to enter its doors in order to have a good time or to enjoy an hour of fine music will never lead them to repent of their sins when inside its walls, and the power of the Church lies in *a changed life.*

V. Congregations have not kept pace with the growth of population. In many cases, in both city and country, they have rapidly declined in the last generation. There are many towns and cities in the Middle West where the population has more than doubled in the last thirty years, where also there has been little or no change in race elements; and yet, the same churches (and few or none have been added in this period) that were full in 1875 now have a meager attendance. Where formerly several scores of farmers' carriages were hitched every Sunday morning, there are to-day almost none.

In both New England and the Mississippi Valley,

in localities where few foreigners are to be found, the abandoned country church is a frequent sight; or if not abandoned, it is living at a poor, dying rate. Another fact of importance in this connection, to which all ministers sadly testify, is this: It requires at present two or three times as many families in a parish to maintain an audience of two hundred people as it did thirty-five years ago.

It is true that there are more people attending the churches of certain towns to-day than fifty years ago in proportion to the population. But behind this bare statement of fact, as often made, lies a radically changed social and racial condition which makes the situation far different than it appears to be on the surface. That situation is substantially this: The city has grown, for example, from a population of five thousand Protestants to a present population of ten thousand, — four thousand Catholics and six thousand Protestants. More people do attend church to-day, because nearly all the Catholics are churchgoers. But when they are subtracted, it will be found that the church attendants furnished by the present six thousand Protestants will not equal the churchgoers furnished by the smaller Protestant population a half century ago. Probably in many similar cases not half as many attend as formerly. And this is the only fair basis of comparison.

VI. It is a notable fact that the gifts of recent years to other institutions have been manyfold greater than to the Church, which really touches deeper springs and more sides of human life than

all these other recipients of the benefactions of the rich. How easy to raise large funds for school, library, hospital, or any work of general charity! And this is well. But how hard to increase the income of a church! In explanation, it is said, "These are public institutions; they do something practical and tangible; everybody sees the good that they accomplish." Very true. But what is more public, more far-spreading or deep-reaching than the influence of the Church of God? And is the joy and uplift of worship that makes faces shine and aching hearts glad, impractical, and intangible? Is the repentance of the sinner, — his reform from drink and profanity, his better care of his family (the normal work of every church), — is this a trivial matter? Cannot these things be seen and felt? The fact is that the Church is largely neglected by the donors of great sums of money, because its importance is not realized. It does not appeal to them as an institution of vital need and transcendent worth. And their indifference is not caused by the imperfections of the Church. If it received more of their personal devotion and financial help, making it all that it ought to be, many of these charitable and reformatory agencies, that now win such immense donations, would not be needed.

All humanitarian ministries are noble and invaluable, but the Church does more than anything else to help all men realize their true *humanity;* and when this is accomplished, many other activities that touch only the fringes of life will not be

needed. It is the Church, more than anything else, that equips a man to be a Good Samaritan; and yet, what the Samaritan does, precious as his work is, is not primary but secondary. When the sufferer has been taken to the "inn," and his physical necessities supplied, the greater needs have still to be met — the services that minister to him as a son of God. The nurse with bath and bandage cannot provide patience, courage, love, hope, a sense of God's presence — these are the fruit of religion, the product of the Church. All keen-souled and clear-eyed philanthropic workers understand that there are depths which their agencies do not reach, heights to which they cannot lift the sufferer.

And even more than all this: It is the office of the Church so to order human life, individual and corporate, that few shall fall by the way to need help. The more we have of this divine prevision of love, represented by religions, the less the Good Samaritan will be needed; and the best fortune for humanity would be such a wide and powerful organization of the Kingdom of God among men that there would be few sufferers to call for the attentions of the Samaritan. And this great work of *prevention*, by preoccupying the soul with religion, is the peculiar and precious work of the Church.

VII. Another fact which shows that the hold of the Church upon the world is lessening is the decline in the salaries of ministers within recent years. In spite of all the plethora of wealth, a vast ma-

jority of ministers are shamefully underpaid. Careful investigations show that, while the cost of living has greatly increased in the last ten years, the average preacher is actually paid less money than a decade ago. A majority, and many of these with college training, receive less than good clerks or skilled artisans! It is well that the clerical profession should not be a lucrative position, but a man to be of best use to his church and the world needs and deserves a competent income. A meager financial support for the preacher is bad for those who sit in the pews. If he is near the starvation point, he will starve them!

There is surely something wrong when a business man is content with having a minister who receives a smaller salary than one of his subordinate clerks! He certainly does not think that the Church has any great value when he allows this condition to continue. And how can the Church be worth much when leading men so treat it? Is it not ridiculous for such a man to send his wife to listen to a $600 preacher, but at the same time insist that the principal of the high school where his children attend shall receive $1,600? Such a case is not exceptional in villages. The way to business success so much more important than the way to heaven! Surely the preacher who is the leader of adults in the life of the spirit ought to be a man who deserves a larger income than the teacher who trains young people in the rudiments of common knowledge.

It is not surprising that the business man often

says that it is a bore to go to church and listen to an incompetent pulpiteer. But is not he himself chiefly, if not solely, responsible for the situation? If he and others like him would interest themselves in the Church as they ought there would be a strong man in the pulpit who would do more to help his children to real and abiding success in life than the principal of the high school, invaluable as his services are. Many a merchant or manufacturer thinks himself liberal when his annual contribution to the Church is less than what he spends on one club dinner to his chums or on a single automobile excursion! Sad evidence of the popular estimate of the Church as practically worthless!

VIII. The decline of the Church is shown, not only in the smaller salary given the minister in these days of great business prosperity, but in his changed position among men, from a person of authority to a merely decorative figure. He is not worth going to hear regularly on Sundays, but it is well to have him around so that he may be used at banquets, weddings, and funerals! Of course, clergymen of superior mental ability and winsome personality still possess a decided influence. But even in these cases, it is not comparable to what such a man would have exercised two generations ago. Moreover, to-day his influence is largely, if not wholly, personal, not at all official. Better so, it may be said. It is far better that we respect simply the man rather than his garb or office. It is held that while the mere ecclesiastic has been dethroned, the real shepherd of souls has come in-

creasingly into possession of a more personal and a more precious power — not an ecclesiastical, but a spiritual authority.

But this is not the whole of the matter. Whatever else the change may indicate, and some features of the change are wholesome and auspicious, it does reveal a marked decline of popular respect for the Church as an institution. An illustration of what is meant lies near at hand. It is well that our ambassador to Great Britain should be a man who by his personal worth shall command respect. But above and beyond this, we expect him to receive consideration because he represents a great nation. If the only respect shown him should become personal rather than representative, this fact would show that our country had lost its place among the nations. So likewise, if a minister has no influence among men except what flows from his personal character, largely the present situation, the fact is ominous. It shows that the institution that he represents has lost public favor. The small place which the average clergyman occupies to-day in the community, the slight influence which he exerts upon the actual conduct of his own people, prove that the Church, which he represents, is not looked upon with the old-time devotion and reverence.

IX. Confirmation of the fact just stated may be found in many current statements similar to the following remark made by a prominent labor leader in a recent address before a company of ministers in the City of Boston. After contending that workmen are seriously considering what they shall

do with the clergy, he said: "Our toilers propose to abolish the clerical profession unless its members can justify their existence from an economic point of view"! To what low depths has the Church fallen when an intelligent representative of labor can use such language! And similar opinions are wide-spread among the members of our Labor Unions. This attitude, and not the social exclusiveness of the average congregation, explains their absence from church services. They have ceased to care for the sanctities which the Church represents. Their materialistic scheme of life has no place for a minister, because he is not "a producer of things." Justify himself from an *economic* point of view! That is, honor the man who raises the best potatoes, but damn the man who enlarges the spiritual life of the soul, — a Channing, a Beecher, a Wesley!

Men with such notions can be brought back into the Church only with great difficulty. To accomplish this, we must do something more than "keep the church open every day in the week." No new pew system, no mere creed revision, no beating of ecclesiastical drums, no pulpit sensationalism, — none of these things will accomplish anything in this direction. The disease is too deep for trivial palliatives. The only remedy is to make these people see that the Church is an institution of supreme human importance; an institution that they need more than any other. They must be led to widen their "economic point of view" to the sky-line of the spiritual life!

X. The popular attitude toward the Sunday-school indicates how far the Church has lost its hold upon people. It is true that there is a great deal now written respecting the religious education of the young, but the whole discussion reveals the inadequacy of present methods and the dangers in the existing situation. It is also true that there are millions of children in our Sunday-schools, but the conviction deepens among earnest observers that their moral and religious training is very defective. If we look carefully below the surface, several discouraging facts are clearly evident:

(*a*) The average parent, with unfortunate complacency and indifference, hands over the religious training of his children to the Sunday-school, and then gives the matter no further thought. The children attend or not as they please. The father *insists* that his boy shall attend the high school with regularity, but even the mother allows her daughter to remain away from the Sunday-school for the most trivial reasons. The lesson of the public school *must* be learned. On the other hand, parents seldom know what the Sunday-school lesson is; and the children are, as a rule, never compelled to study it. The greatest solicitude is shown respecting the baby's diet; but later, the nurture of the young soul is not given a thought. Parents insist that their children shall have a competent dancing-master, but how many of them even know their Sunday-school teacher by sight? All these facts lead to one conclusion — a popular indiffer-

ence to the Church and the interests for which the Church stands.

(*b*) The inefficiency and imperfection of the Sunday-school itself point in the same direction. Our present methods are woefully inadequate. In many cases, from a scientific pedagogical view-point, much of our so-called Bible study in the Sunday-school is a farce. The time devoted to it is not sufficient; the conditions under which the instruction is given are not favorable; the teachers, as a rule, are not thoroughly equipped; the lessons have not been studied by the members of the classes; the home influences have not reenforced and emphasized the value of the work. Good results, under these circumstances, could not reasonably be expected.

A slight comparison will make the situation clear: A boy who attends the Sunday-school for ten years, from six to sixteen (a longer period than usual), does not devote as many hours to the study of the large, varied, and important collection of writings that we call the Bible, as the same boy gives to a single year's course in the high school on Shakespeare! No wonder that such methods fail to impart a knowledge of the Bible or secure a vital interest in Scripture. That such methods are tolerated is due to the radically changed attitude of the people toward religion and the Church. Formerly a knowledge of the Bible and a mastery of doctrines stood first, — these things must be known; and secular subjects took a second place. But now, science, mathematics, history, and language *must* be mastered, while Scripture and creed

do not have even second place! And all this follows, because people do not realize the importance of the Church.

(*c*) It is well known that when boys and girls reach the high school age, they march in great numbers out of the Sunday-school, and in many cases also out of the Church. And why is this? Very naturally, when they begin at that period to compare the methods of the average Sunday-school with the methods of the public school, they are so thoroughly impressed with the inferiority of the former that they lose interest in the Biblical instruction. And this is not surprising. As soon as an earnest boy arrives at the point where he begins to think seriously, he must, as a rule, in these days, become dissatisfied with his Sunday-school instruction, for the reasons already mentioned. Now, the fact that such conditions are allowed to exist and continue, clearly proves that a large number of people do not give this important matter any serious attention, because they do not have any deep interest in the Church.

The conclusion of the whole matter is this: The Church is to-day facing the most serious crisis in its history; and if this crisis is not successfully passed, a calamity will befall the human race of the most momentous character. It is not a crisis that pertains primarily to any particular form of creed, ritual, or organization. It involves the existence of the Church itself; and bound up with the Church are the spiritual interests of mankind, so vast, so precious, so essential!

In these discouraging facts, every earnest lover, not only of religion but of humanity, should find an urgent summons to new consecration and larger efforts. The magnitude of the crisis is a call to heroism. It is no time for blind optimism or ignoble fear or unworthy retreat. Some of these obstacles can be removed. Some of this indifference can be turned into enthusiastic interest. Some of these foes can be destroyed. Some new message may be spoken that will alarm the thoughtless into needed loyalty, and some fresh methods may be devised that will help the Church to a stronger hold upon modern life. It is well to see the dangers, but it is best to take means to rescue the Church from its dangers and so win a victory for God and man.

V RELIGION AS A CORPORATE LIFE

IN a recent letter to Paul Sabatier of Paris, Count Tolstoy used the following language: "Religion is truth and goodness; the Church falsehood and evil. I tell you frankly, I cannot agree with those who believe the Church is an organization indispensable to religion. The Church has everywhere been a cruel and lying institution, which, in seeking for temporal advantages, has perverted and distorted the true Christian doctrine." It is obvious that this language is extreme and intemperate.

The Church, as an imperfect human institution, has done a great many foolish, and some cruel, things. It has been imperfect like schools, courts, philosophies, literatures, and governments. But priests have, in the past, been no more superstitious than doctors, and old law books are as dreary reading as old theologies.

Hardly any other opinion of the Church could, however, be expected of such an extreme individualist as Tolstoy, who does not believe in institutions or organizations of any kind, — to him they are all bad! On this account, his general view of both Christianity and civilization are "so perverted and distorted" that it is impossible for him to appreciate the Church, or to pass a just judg-

ment upon it. To remember who Tolstoy is, — his peculiar limitation in this particular, — is sufficient refutation of his statement.

Surely, this adverse opinion of Tolstoy respecting the Church is decisively refuted by human history. For instance: What did the splendid oracles of the great Hebrew prophets accomplish, while simply floating about in the minds of individuals here and there? It was not until they were organized and incorporated in the synagogue that they became a social power for the training of a wonderful people.

The synagogue was the most effective invention ever devised for the spiritualization of human life. It substituted soul for sacrifice, a prayer of the heart for the offering from the field, pulpit for altar, preacher for priest, worshiping congregation for gorgeous ceremonial, an educational for a sacrificial administration of religion. It was the synagogue, representing and cultivating religion as a corporate life, — a spiritual training in common, — that made Israel a peculiar and indestructible people. Without this institution there never would have been a Jesus of Nazareth.

Moreover, the gospel of Jesus itself had to be given an organic form in the Church, the daughter of the synagogue with a freer spirit and a larger message, before it could become effective as a world-power. If it had simply been treasured as a precious memory in the minds of loving disciples, scattered here and there and living in isolation, it never would have gone beyond the shadow of Jerusalem.

But when Paul and others began to incorporate this message in the Church and use this institution to train men for citizenship in the new kingdom, — then it was that the redemption of Europe really began. We must always remember, what is so often forgotten, that the power of early Christianity lay, not so much in its *creed* as in its *congregation*. Here was one of its great advantages over Stoicism and Neo-Platonism: It actually trained men and women for life!

But Tolstoy is blind to all this. Also, in writing as he does of the Church, he has in mind only the worse aspects of organized religion as displayed in the ecclesiastical institutions of Russia. And even the inner spirit of the Russian Church, at its best, he does not understand or appreciate. Surely, a man, however great and noble in some respects, whose historical views are so imperfect, whose experience has been so limited, and whose general interpretation of life is so one-sided, is in no position to pass a true or a just judgment upon the Christian Church.

The statement that the Church is not indispensable to religion is one of those glittering half-truths which is worse than a wholly erroneous proposition. Religion may, indeed, exist apart from the Church, just as wisdom apart from the school, truth apart from books, and justice apart from courts. But, as a matter of fact, there would be little culture in the world if there were no schools; without books knowledge would soon vanish from the earth; and without courts injustice would sweep the land.

So, too, religion may exist apart from the Church; its roots are not in forms or creeds, but in the soul. But without the Church, religion can no more thrive in a community than education without schools. Piety needs symbol and service to foster it as much as culture needs books. The consciousness of God needs public worship to sustain it as much as human society needs courts to maintain order.

Many eminent men, especially in modern times, have fallen into the error set forth by Tolstoy, by failing to understand that religion is something more than a private opinion or personal conviction. It is vastly more than this — *it is a corporate life!* The failure of so many really earnest people to appreciate the Church in these days is largely due to defective vision at this point. It is judged solely by its creed, by its music, or by its preaching.

Now, it is unfortunate for the Church whenever it is burdened by outgrown dogmas or hampered by inadequate rites. This condition tends to drive progressive men outside its walls, while it often tempts those who remain inside to lapse into insincerity. But after all, these dogmas and rites are only a small part of the real life of the Church. How soon many a church would die if there were nothing to it or in it but the commonplace sermon! However, its real mission and value, even when the sermon is as good as it ought always to be, must be found chiefly in the *common* worship, the *common* service, the *common* hopes and aspirations. The minister may impart little knowledge,

but the Church is important because it stands for many things besides the message of the preacher: for repentance of sin, for faith in God, for love of Jesus, for hope of heaven. It must be judged, not by the discords in its music, but by its spiritual life in common.

The Church, as a reservoir of organized religion, holds a vast accumulation of stored and conserved spiritual energy, by which individuals as they come into contact with it are vitalized. It is a storage battery, dynamic with the influences of countless hearts; from its fulness of corporate life the weak are strengthened, by it the sorrowful are comforted, and through it the sinful are chastened. The Church is a religious organism into which a man pours his life; and, conserved as an incorporated influence, it remains there to serve and to bless others. In this way he rescues his best self from extinction, making his conviction and aspiration a perpetual power for good in his community.

What a man hopes, when breathed into the life of the congregation, helps to form an atmosphere of hope which makes it easy for others to lay hold of immortality. The thrill of conscious communion with God, which he experiences in a time of spiritual exaltation, is there permanently conserved, and it remains in the Church to flow out continuously, and thus to induce in others a similar mood of uplifting worship. His own heart-beat of love, imparted by tender word and gracious look to the common life of the congregation, sets up a rhythmic movement of love in other hearts, as one swinging pendulum

will cause others near it to move in sympathetic response.

There must be something more than cultivated and saintly individuals in the world, valuable as they are, if the work of civilization is to be most successfully carried forward. Men must join hands to inspire one another and also to create the volume of power needed to sweep obstacles from the path of progress and to conquer the enemies of truth and right. The emancipation of the individual is a great gain, but the best part of his emancipation comes when he begins to work in common with and for others.

In the Church we participate in a religious life that is larger, richer, nobler than our own. It is communal, comprehensive, public, impressive. The gains and benefits are mutual and reciprocal. Through it we hand on our strength to strengthen others; in our weakness we find there the strength of others to sustain us. It was of this truth that Jesus spoke when he said: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Those men who gather in the name of Jesus evolve a spirit of Jesus that is far greater than the mere sum of their private aspirations. The "being together" represents, not simply addition but multiplication. The "life in common" generates life at a geometrical ratio. It is this principle of social life that makes a *community*. We have a hint of this in the word *conscience:* the sense of right that comes from seeing and feeling things in common!

We find, therefore, that in the Church religion is both organized and energized, being there enlarged into a public dispensation. The private mood and the personal effort are reenforced and multiplied by the grace of publicity and the agency of association. The lonely and solitary worshiper, how slow his pulse, as a rule; how narrow his vision; how selfish his spirit! How often the feeling rises no higher than this: "Just myself alone am worshiping God"! But put him in the congregation of the saints, how quick his heart-throb, how wide his sympathies, how spiritual his aspiration! The common confession, "*We* worship God," strikes a higher note than that of any private devotion, and it represents a reverence that swells into an unselfish uplift of soul never felt by the isolated individual.

The single worker for human good, how hard the conflict and how uncertain the outcome! But group the workers together, how the *team* work tells! Marching *together*, the distance is short. Singing *together*, the cheer is great. Standing *together*, the temptations are easily resisted. Lifting *together*, the burden is gladly borne. Fighting *together*, the victory is surely won.

The Church represents this *togetherness* of religion, in which there is more joy, more inspiration, more discipline, more effectiveness than in lonely vigil or solitary meditation. Worshiping *together*, the heart is warmed to new aspirations. Listening *together*, the prophet's message seems vastly more impressive. Working for sufferer or

sinner *together*, the redemption of the soul is more surely and more swiftly accomplished.

It was when the torches were *bunched together* that a light was made large and bright enough to attract the attention of the lost wanderers and tell them where their friends were on the distant hill in the dark night — a welcome signal of cheer and hope! This is what the Church does: it bunches the good, the true, the noble together so that the weak may have encouragement and the lost may know where to find friends. Every person added to the Church helps to make this signal of cheer and hope larger and brighter!

Those who, with Tolstoy, cry aloud, "Let us away with the Church, for it is only a hindrance to piety," fail to see the power and the importance of religion as a *corporate life*. They mistake their personal faith for the whole of piety. They are blind to one of the plainest and most fundamental facts of human life: the need of association to inspire, to perpetuate, and to ennoble. Cooperation both multiplies and hallows the energies of the individual. But it does even more than this, — it preserves the new energy thus evolved as a permanent life-influence in the community.

Astronomers tell us that a planet must reach a certain size before its force of gravitation would be sufficient to retain an atmosphere and make life possible. So, likewise, there must be a certain aggregation of people before the required psychic atmosphere is produced in which precious forms of religious life — aspiration, enthusiasm, wor-

ship — become spontaneous and vigorous. The phenomenon of the ordinary revival reveals the operation of this principle in a somewhat crude form. It is a psychological law that in various activities of life twelve men working together will do more in one hour than one man in twelve hours. It is wise to command some, "Go apart, and be yourself," but more often it is wiser to say, "Go with others, and get out of yourself"!

A great American teacher has truly written: "Men are not saved in bundles." But this only presents one aspect of salvation. To this truth must be added another which is more widely applicable: Men must be associated in a common service before they can reach their best or be their best. There are lessons that we learn only as we study and serve together.

Another half truth is frequently stated in these words: The world cannot be redeemed by machinery. Very true! But it is also true: The world cannot be saved without organization. The earth is not peopled by disembodied spirits. We must also remember that the tasks of the world cannot be done without machinery. A machine is an embodied idea, the tool of motive power. Both tool and motive are needed. Moreover, organization is more than a tool. It not only applies energy, it also conserves, multiplies, and perpetuates the energies of life.

In the fall of the year when the work of the season is done, before it is pushed off to float about idly in the wind, the tree draws out of the leaf and

back into its own life for service next year the protoplasm, or " vital stuff," which is in the leaf. This is a wonderfully effective economy of the vegetable world. In this way the tree conserves its own vital energies. Likewise the Church, as a great tree of life, draws into itself and preserves the influence of the individual, so that, long after he has passed away like the fading leaf, the spiritual substance of his life remains in the organism to enrich and bless other lives.

As the author rescues his discovery or ideal from oblivion and gives it wings to fly to the uttermost parts of the world by writing it out, so the human heart makes its yearning for holiness, or its ecstasy of delight in the consciousness of God, a public and perpetual blessing by putting it into the life of the Church. This done and it becomes organized, incorporated, instituted. It is henceforth a permanent evangel among men. We deal here with something vastly greater than the pious notion of a mere individual. It is a public ministry that prompts that individual to a supreme effort; and the contribution that he makes to the congregation, instead of vanishing, remains as a part of its permanent life. He is himself lifted out of his selfishness by this public service, and this best product of his life is set among the infinite and eternal influences that make for righteousness.

Can any one adequately describe how great a service the Church performs for human society when it develops a great soul, and then preserves the memories and ministries, associations and as-

pirations of that noble life within the treasury of its organization, where all this spirituality operates continuously to educate and enrich other lives? We touch here one of the basic facts of human society, — a fact which shows how necessary the Church is, not only to religion but to life. It is this supremely important fact that is ignored by all those who neglect the Christian Church.

It is an unfortunate and ruinous waste when a person so completely isolates himself from the Church that none of his moral worth or spiritual excellences are contributed to the corporate life of humanity and made permanent factors in the "commonwealth" of the race. If he has ignored the Church and withdrawn from his fellows, when he dies there is no organized working product of his character left behind to enrich and bless mankind during the years to come, as there would have been had he by association imparted himself to others or made himself a vitalizing influence in the congregation. In this way he would have perpetuated himself, and he also would have made himself a power for good in the lives of others. There are ways in which we grow only as we are grouped together, and there are services that we can perform for humanity only as we labor in common with others, and there are permanent benefits that we can bestow upon the world only as we contribute the best in ourselves to the corporate life of the Church.

In this connection we see the error of Henry Drummond's epigrammatic statement, which has

done not a little harm: "The great use of the Church is to help men to do without it." At first glance this looks like a profound truth, and probably many a man has used this remark, coming as it does from an earnest teacher of religion and a warm friend of the Church, to justify his neglect of the public worship of God.

On the face of it, this language seems to convey a compliment to the Church. The implication is that the Church, like the school, puts men where they do not need it. When it has brought men to repentance and redeemed them from future damnation, its services are no longer needed. When the lessons are learned in school and Church, people may graduate and give these institutions no more personal attention. After the Church has played its part as a sort of vaccination hospital, rendering the individual immune to the wrath of God and to Satanic wiles, he may go on his way in safety with no more interest in it.

The pulpit has done not a little to foster this view of the Church. If religion, as so often asserted, is simply, or chiefly, a means by which people are enabled to escape hell and enter heaven, then Drummond's statement seems a quite reasonable application of this theory. But this is a very imperfect conception of the needs of human life and the office of the Church.

This assumed analogy between Church and school does not hold at this point. The work of the school is to prepare the boy for life by providing a certain amount of instruction in a few funda-

mental branches. On the other hand, the Church is a power-house continually replenishing the motives and vitalizing the ideals of life. The Church is really much more like the market, where one goes, not once for a lasting supply of the bread of life, but repeatedly to satisfy daily needs. No single act of worship will last a man a lifetime. The food of life for the spirit of man from the Spirit of God must be gathered day by day like the manna of old.

It is a very false idea of the Church which represents it as a place where, once for all, we make our peace with God and secure a ticket to heaven. Every week brings its peculiar burdens, trials, and temptations for which the Church must continuously prepare us by giving us the fresh grace that will enable us to bear them patiently and face them bravely.

It is not enough to look just once through "the east window of divine surprise" and worship the Lord God with gladness of heart. We need that joy of devotion as the continuing habit of life. It is not enough to repent of some great sin and then lapse into a careless mood. The spirit of penitence needs to run like a life-giving stream through all our days. It is not enough to make a single visit to the Mount of Transfiguration and behold the shining face of the Master. We need to live constantly in communion with him. It is this continuous spiritual ministry for which the Church stands. The needs that it serves are as perpetual as the breath of life. Instead of preparing men to

do without it, the more the Church does for them the more they need it.

Again, Drummond's statement wholly ignores the ministry of the Church as an organism of *corporate* religion, to which reference has just been made. It fails to take into account the important fact that the Church is an invaluable tool or method of life which we constantly need, and by which from day to day we render most precious services to humanity. After all, its highest function is not what it does for the individual himself, but what it enables that individual to do for others. Grant that the Church may quickly place the individual where he no longer needs its services (a preposterous assumption!), still its larger ministry remains: *How that person may use the Church to bless others!*

It is altogether too low and narrow a view of the Church to think only of what the worshiper can get out of it for himself — the mere personal culture or satisfaction. The nobler consideration is, What can he put into it that shall bless the world? How can it be used as a tool to help others? Whoever says, "I am saved, and therefore in no further need of the Church," or, "I am strong, and it has nothing to give me," — any one who so thinks is really lost — lost in that selfishness that damns.

The Church is an organism where a man's love, sympathy, hope, reverence, strength, cheer, and aspiration may be, and ought to be, put to service for the good of others. It represents a supremely fruitful method of public helpfulness. It is an

agency by which a man not only rescues the best in himself from loss and oblivion, but he, in this way, sets his best self at work effectively to better the lives of his fellow men.

We see, therefore, that a man can never outgrow the need of the Church, any more than a mechanic can outgrow the need of tools or a surgeon the need of instruments. It is a tool by which to work in fashioning the lives of others, an instrument by which to relieve the suffering of the wounded in spirit.

However wise one may be, that wisdom must be used to enlighten the ignorant; and the Church exists that the wise in heart may serve those in need. However pure one may be, that purity must be so displayed that it will purify the world; and the Church exists that this may be accomplished. However strong one may be, that strength must be used to help the weak; and the Church exists to bring strong and weak together, that each may help the other; for lifting a burden blesses the heart that lifts as much as it does the crushed heart that is relieved. In no other way can a person more surely or more abundantly enrich and ennoble the world than by putting himself at work for God and man in and through the Church.

The visitors to Switzerland are prepared to climb the lofty Alps by being tied together with strong ropes which are also fastened to two or more powerful and experienced guides. Thus prepared they start to ascend the steep and dangerous mountain-side. Up they go over rough and difficult

paths where the feet find it impossible to tread easily or securely; beside precipices where the head becomes dizzy; across ice-fields that crack and slide and groan as they pass; through mists that darken the way, and then in a blinding glare of light that dazzles the eye. A hard and hazardous trip!

But when the foot of the inexperienced tourist slips, the ropes which reach to the sure-footed guides keep him from falling. Almost over the edge into the yawning abyss below; but the ropes save from instant death. A moment more and the rushing snowslide would have buried the party; but the quick action of sturdy heroes averts the disaster. When the cloud dips down, or the intense light blinds the eye so that they cannot see the path, the guides lead the way, and the onward march is maintained. Up and on they go in safety until the summit is gained. Then at last the enchantment of earth's sublimest landscape is spread out before eager eyes that will never behold a grander scene. The glory of the mountains of the Lord is attained, because these travelers were roped together and protected by strong, stalwart guides!

Admirable illustration of the office of the Christian Church, standing as it does for religion as a corporate life! For what does the Church really do? It binds old and young, men and women, rich and poor, wise and ignorant, weak and strong together with bands of affection, sympathy, love: a sweet and tender *common* interest; a worship in *common*,

a service in *common*, a life in *common;* a spiritual and spiritualizing *community;* a dear "togetherness," where the strength of all helps the weakness of the individual.

So associated and so bound together with chosen and skilful leaders in the things of the Spirit, up the heights of life the followers of Jesus go. What a mountain climb indeed! Feet slip in moments of temptation, but the cords of Christian fellowship prevent a fall. Eyes grow dim with tears in times of sorrow, but the good cheer and prayerful tenderness of faithful companions wipe them away. Body and soul are almost crushed under the great burdens of life, but a helping hand lightens the load and the march forward is made easier. Hearts fail in hours of stress and strain, but, with the bonds of religious brotherhood pulling strong and the voice of the minister sounding clear through the mists of doubt and fear, all goes well. On and up by grace of the common life of the Church they climb! On the top at last, with the heavenly home in view, gained, not alone, but by laboring, serving, worshiping, and living *together!* The Church of God, because it leads to God!

VI WHAT CREATES THE CHURCH

IN these days there are many estimable persons who admit that the Church is good for other people, but they look upon it as having no value for themselves. It is a serviceable police station which helps to hold the lawless in restraint and to discipline wrong-doers. This view is an ancient and wide-spread superstition to which Gibbon lent his great influence. It is now more common than usual among those complacent and comfortable worldly men and women, who never themselves worship, but who imagine that their property will be somewhat safer and their families a little better protected if other people do worship! That the Church serves these ends is very true. It helps mightily to preserve order. It adds value to property and it makes human life more secure. But this is not its main reason for existence, nor do we find here its chief ministry.

There are others who tolerate the Church, and perhaps contribute something for its support, without giving it any personal attention, on the ground that it is a sort of hospital where weak women and effeminate men receive some benefit. Many of these persons will even admit that it ought to be generally supported because it comforts the sad and cheers the dying. It is like many other charitable insti-

tutions; it is good to have a few in the community to serve unfortunates, but they are to be shunned as long as possible! No one ought to go there until he is obliged to do so! This view is also common.

It is true that the Church does give comfort and cheer to hosts of people. But these are, at best, only somewhat subordinate features of its ministry. They are, indeed, very precious services, but they are not the primary reasons for its existence. It exists more to make strong hearts than to stop heartaches. Its main task is to create joy and inspire heroism rather than simply to console the dejected and encourage the defeated. Its chief reason for existence is to develop character rather than merely to distribute alms to the unfortunate. As true religion is the manliest of human interests, so the Church, its representative, exists to train people in manliness. It does not need any man's dole as a mere gratuity. It asks for the earnest attentions and the generous contributions of every one, because it is doing a large and important work for all mankind.

Other popular misapprehensions respecting the Church still have a wide acceptance. There are many who hold that the Church has everywhere been the product of priestcraft. We are frequently told that cunning and designing men, intent on selfish pleasures or the gratification of a base ambition for power, have invented or created the Church simply to enslave the race, and make others contribute to their own ease and vanity. Unfortunately, priestcraft has played a large part in the

affairs of the Christian Church, just as a selfish statecraft has cursed many a nation. The two cases are exactly parallel. Manifestly crafty priests have no more created the Church than have tyrants created the State. Both are comparatively infrequent perversions of precious and invaluable offices. Priests have been human; so, also, have statesmen; but both come into their positions of power at the demand of imperative needs. The soul calls for the one, the community calls for the other; human society needs both.

Still others assert that superstitions long ago created and still maintain the Church. Ignorant minds are superstitious; superstition breeds fear; and the fears of men drive them to prayer and penance. Hence arises the Church. We frequently hear this line of argument. And then these persons go on to explain that when science shall have destroyed these dark and horrible superstitions the Church will cease to exist. It will vanish like mist before the rising sun of Truth! Such persons claim that the progress of scientific discovery means the inevitable downfall of altar and pulpit.

It is a sad fact that superstitions have occupied a very large place in the history of many religious organizations. But it hardly could be otherwise. For these organizations, like club, lodge, and state, have had to lay hold of the people at hand, who, unfortunately, have often been both selfish and superstitious. And selfish men in a club or lodge make it selfish, as superstitious men in a church make

it superstitious. But mere selfishness does not create the club and lodge, nor does superstition create the Church. Superstitions have colored the message of the Church, as the stained-glass windows have colored the light within its walls. But the message has had elements coming from God, as the light comes, not from the glass, but from the sun.

Moreover, the work of science, beneficently destructive of superstition as it is, does not touch the real basis of the Church. It may supplant old forms by truer symbols, sweep away narrow doctrines to give place to larger affirmations, and revise ancient methods to accomplish a greater good, but all such changes in the accidents of piety prove the permanence rather than the evanescence of the Church. One might as well hold that science will dry up a mother's heart or destroy man's love of beauty, as that science will ever extinguish man's desire for the beauty of holiness, or lead him permanently to abandon the act of worship; for these spiritual aspirations and exercises are simply the quest of the soul for its Source, and while God and man remain, the human heart will yearn for the Infinite Beauty and the Eternal Good.

The fear of science on the one hand and the arrogance of scientists on the other are both passing away. The panic of churchmen, so unwise and needless, has nearly ceased. The caustic assumption of a few prominent discoverers, that religion is everywhere the mere product of ignorant fear, now finds little or no favor among the eminent leaders of the scientific world. What ought to have been evident

to every clear and earnest mind from the beginning is the double truth, that science does sweep away many superstitions, and also that even its most destructive work only lays bare in broader and plainer outlines the everlasting foundation of religion and the permanent need of the Church.

But, in passing, another important truth, seldom appreciated, needs to be briefly mentioned: Science often not only destroys ancient superstitions, but it also leads in new superstitions of its own! It sweeps aside many of the falsities of tradition, but how often do we find that its own oracles are sadly defective! Scientists, in constantly outgrowing themselves, a laudable achievement, ought to be very modest when speaking of the superstitions of the Church! The doctor has little advantage over the priest, except in his openness of mind; for to-morrow he will lay aside as a superstition the theory that he held yesterday.

And on the whole, some of the superstitions of the scientists, like latent heat in physics and bloodletting in medicine (to go back but a few years), seem to-day as absurd as many of the ancient superstitions of the Church. Others, like belief in witchcraft, are as much chargeable to science as to religion. A scientist like Haeckel and even a philosopher like Herbert Spencer have spread abroad certain superstitions — that is, errors about our spiritual life — as great and as harmful as the superstitions of a Luther or a Wesley respecting the devil. Judged by the test of human experience, the old superstition respecting miracles was probably

no worse than the notion held by many a living scientist that what has been called the human soul is nothing but a temporary collocation of material atoms! Of the two, a man who loves Jesus and believes in his miraculous birth will probably make a better neighbor than the other man who rejects miracles, but does not believe that there is any future life!

We come now to the heart of the subject: On what basis does the Church rest, and by what factors is it created? Not on Scripture text, however golden, nor by tradition, however venerable. These are the accidents of religion, not its essence; and the Church, certainly at its best, represents essential religion. Not on scientific discovery nor by logical processes, however important or elaborate these products of the human mind. The intellect is no alien within the sanctuary, but the heart is there supreme. Not on prophetic message nor by the Master's Person, divinely helpful as these are. The Church of God has a wider and a deeper foundation than even these sanctities.

The Church rests on *human need;* it is created and sustained by *human need!* It is the "Church of God," because it ministers to those supreme necessities of the spiritual life which God has implanted and organized in human nature. Deeper than this we cannot go; wider than this we cannot reach; a foundation more precious or permanent than this we cannot imagine. The Church has, in "human necessity," a basis, the same in general character (though broader and deeper) as

that which underlies all other human institutions: the market, the court, the school, the hospital.

The need of a place where the produce of the fields and the products of handicraft may be bought and sold created the market; and this center of traffic will last as long as the race exists. But man has other needs besides food for his body. He is immortal spirit as well as mortal flesh. He needs bread of life for the soul and spiritual raiment for his higher nature. His welfare and glory, even as an animal, are closely related to his moral and religious condition. The Church, which exists for the care of souls, ministers to needs just as imperative as those served by trade and far more important than those supplied by the market.

The court came into being at the demand of human need. The abiding necessity of society called judge, jury, and bar into existence. Some agency was needed to administer justice between man and man; to enforce law and maintain order; and to discover and punish offenders against public peace and private rights. This institution will endure, under some form, as long as civilization remains on this earth. But there is another law to which man is answerable besides human statutes: the law of God. He has obligations, not only to his neighbor, but to his Creator. There is a divine justice that brings into view his future destiny and calls him to consider eternal obligations, and this is larger and more authoritative than the civic justice which has to do with his temporal affairs.

Every man needs to be instructed respecting

these higher laws. He needs to be made to feel the presence and sanctity of these divine obligations. He needs to be reminded that he stands perpetually at the judgment bar, not simply of an earthly tribunal, but of Almighty God. A deep sense of responsibility to God does more than anything else to make man meet his responsibilities to his neighbor. Here lies the need of the Church: to make man obedient to divine law. And his attitude of loyalty to God, fostered by public worship, helps mightily to make him a law-abiding citizen.

The school was created by the need of wisdom and instruction. The human mind craves truth; man's nature needs education. Every fact discovered increases the need and enlarges the ministry of the school. This institution, devoted to learning, can never be outgrown, no matter what science may discover or invention produce. Human progress can never make education unnecessary.

But there are other lessons which man needs besides those given by the public school. Beyond instruction in numbers, there is the instruction that takes hold of heart and will, and creates character. Beyond the development of memory and reason there is the development of conscience, sympathy, hope, and love; and these are the deep roots of human happiness. Beyond the training of hand and eye to make artist or artisan there is the training of the soul in order to perfect a child of God. Beyond the knowledge learned from books that makes one wise in the affairs of this world there is

the wisdom of the spirit that provides a peace that passeth not away.

These facts point to the need of the Church, a need that deepens as human life broadens. It can never be outgrown. However much the home may do in this line, more is needed than what the home can provide. The Church, as the school of the immortal life, adds strength and beauty to all home trainings.

The hospital meets the needs of the sick and the suffering. As long as bones are broken and bodies become sick this gracious and noble institution cannot be spared from human society. To shut our eyes to these facts and pretend that there is no real disease, that all suffering is an illusion of "mortal mind" — whatever that may be — this is itself an immoral delusion, — a cruel insanity that is practical blasphemy. This is atheistic denial of so much of God's world and God's providence.

But there are worse misfortunes than broken bones: there are broken hearts — worse ills than diseased bodies: there are souls that are sick — worse afflictions than pain: there are spirits in the agonies of death and in the fever of selfishness. The need of spiritual health is constant; it does help toward physical health. On this deep need of spiritual life rests the Church; by this abiding necessity for spiritual training is it created. Therefore the Church, in standing for "the care of souls," represents what is paramount and perpetual in human life. Its ministry is linked in widest benefaction to the whole circle of human welfare.

The state is the organization of humanity to maintain peace and secure justice; and it demands patriotism of every citizen. The school is the organization of young people for the acquisition of knowledge; and attendance is made compulsory. Commerce is the organization of the world for the exchange of commodities; and public opinion insists on industry and thrift, on honor and honesty. The Church is the organization of immortal souls for the worship of God as Love and the service of man in love; and it has a right to ask for a loyal support. All these are products of human need and they work for the good of mankind.

We see, therefore, that the Church is no ephemeral institution, which has sprung into being to meet the demands of a passing hour, or to serve the world during a peculiar period that will soon come to an end. It is not the product of any particular scientific theorem or historical situation. It exists to meet needs that remain, whatever science may discover respecting the universe or however social conditions may be changed. The most radical revolution may sweep through laboratory and university, through court and camp, through legislative hall and judgment chamber; but while man remains a man with wondering heart, social relations, and outlook upon futurity, the Church of God will be needed to train his heart in worship, to regulate these social relations after the pattern of Divine Law, and to confirm the hope that lays hold of eternity.

The Church is no mere incident of European

history; its basis is as deep as human nature and as wide as human need. It is no mere ornament of human life to pass away when the fashion of the age may change; its services to humanity are as continuous and as comprehensive as the heart-beats of the race. It is no mere product of ignorance and fear, which will be swept into oblivion by the enfranchisement of the human mind from superstitions; its labors of love can never end while worshipers feel the mystery of life and sufferers need sympathy; and, however the human mind may advance in wisdom, this universe can never be so cheapened that it will fail to inspire awe, and human life can never be so materialized that moral obligation and spiritual aspirations will cease.

And to perform these holy offices for the human soul, — to solemnize it with some sense of the glory and majesty of the heavens, to quicken it with a consciousness of the presence of Almighty God, to guide it in moments of doubt and guard it in times of temptations, and to lift it on the wings of hope and love, — this is the peculiar ministry of the Christian Church. For it there can be no substitute and to it there can be no end while civilization endures.

In this connection one important fact respecting the Church needs attention. It is the only institution that ministers, directly and specifically, to man as an immortal being. This statement is no mere exaggeration. All other agencies, so far as they develop and ennoble man's nature, prepare him for his destiny beyond the grave. But the

Church alone addresses man as the son of God, who is the heir of eternity. All others aim to prepare him for citizenship here; the Church trains him for heavenly citizenship without divorcing him from this world. What it demands and produces are graces and excellences that are needful and profitable in every daily task; but they are also demanded and produced because he has a future life to live.

The horizon of the market, the court, the school, the hospital, and the home is primarily temporal. The horizon of the Church is both temporal and eternal. The Church alone brings into prominence the spiritual elements in all the other activities of life that man may shape his future destiny by them. In this way the Church sheds upon every landscape a new light that shines far beyond the passing day and reveals the glorious vistas of immortal life. It penetrates the discords of daily toil with a heavenly melody that cheers and inspires. It pours around every occasion a sanctity that hallows and glorifies. It adds a spiritual meaning to sorrows and sacrifices that gives patience and hope. In the moment of selfishness it calls to every man to remember his God and his destiny; and soon the angel in his breast overcomes the animal instinct. In the hour of temptation the Church reminds him that he has an immortal soul to keep spotless for the day of judgment, and, obedient to this heavenly vision, he conquers, and so spreads infinite gladness through his own heart and the hearts of his fellow men.

One other point: The Church, to fulfil its great mission, must keep close to the needs that call it into existence. It must attend strictly to its specific task. So far as it attempts to duplicate the work of other institutions, to that extent it must fail. Its pulpit may use all the treasures of science and history, but it ought not to attempt to teach these subjects in the secular tones of study or rostrum. Scientific and historical facts ought to come freely into the pulpit message; but only to illustrate moral law, to multiply motive power, and to evolve reverence and hope. The preacher fails if he simply imparts a knowledge of facts; he must create life, move hearts, and persuade men to live up to their moral obligations. Every great teacher has this end in mind, but the pulpit stands for this ministry in a far different and in a more definite way. Preaching is not primarily instruction, but persuasion. We leave the lecture-room, saying, "I am wiser"; but we ought to be able to go out of the church feeling, "I am ashamed of my sins, and I will live a better life."

There is, indeed, no place or warrant for the Church, if its minister simply reviews books, discusses the problem of market and school, or expounds the theories of evolution. All this work is good in its way, but these interests are already provided for by other institutions or agencies. Moreover, the minister is likely, at best, to make a poor showing if he undertakes to work on these lines. By these very efforts, necessarily more or

less crude, he will probably lessen his influence over men to whom he ought to speak with authority as a Master of Life. Those who see him stumble in economics or sociology are not likely to trust him in theology. There is no reason why he should be heard on railroad rates, labor unions, or the single tax; and he will not probably enlighten any one on these subjects should he discuss them in his sermons. But he ought to be heard on the great themes that pertain to the spiritual life. He ought to speak the great words respecting duty and destiny, which the Church exists to proclaim, and which will not be spoken unless he declares them, — words of living power concerning patience, repentance, reverence, righteousness, faith in God, and hope of heaven.

Undoubtedly much of the prevailing indifference of cultivated people toward the Church at the present time is due to this tendency to *secularize* the pulpit. The work attempted by the pulpit in these directions is so much poorer than that done by the real masters of such subjects that the preacher suffers by comparison. His intelligent hearers simply conclude, "If this second-rate instruction is all that he can offer me, why go to church? If this is the work of the church, why longer support it? The field is better covered in other ways." But these very persons would respond to spiritual prophecy that takes hold of the deep things of life. Therefore the secularized pulpit not only wastes its energy, it seriously injures the cause of religion by alienating from the Church

many persons who would be an ornament and a help to it.

The sermon should have intellectual power (probably the message of the modern minister is lacking in mental grasp), but it should be intellectual power directed to the production of spiritual life. Preaching may be too academic or too scholastic, but it cannot be too intellectual, provided the mind is centered on religious truth. The pulpit cannot appeal too frequently or too forcefully to the understanding, but it must not stop there; it must use the understanding to move the heart. Prophecy can have enduring and prolific power only as it captivates the reason, but it is also true that it can reform and redeem men only as it reaches and re-creates the soul. The preacher may use all arrows of truth with his bow of faith, but every one must be dipped in love and shot straight into human hearts to make them loving.

The pulpit is the minister's throne of power, where he is to make men realize that they are sons of God, in order that they may live in godliness. If his work does not measure up to this sublime opportunity, he is no true prophet, and the place where he speaks is no true church. Every moment given to mere secular instruction, however attractive, and every impulse spent on mere entertainment, however innocent, not only means a lost opportunity but a violation of his sacred office. The truth of the matter is found in the remark of the railroad president to his pastor: "I am glad that I came to church to-day, for you did not bother

me about Darwinism or Socialism, but you have made me ashamed of my sins." Also, in the words of the college professor, under similar circumstances: "Thank you for the peace that you gave me this morning, and that I so much needed; you did not take me back into the laboratory but up into the heights to worship God."

As a rival of other institutions, doing valuable but secular tasks, or as an agency which merely supplements the works of charity and reform, there is no justification for the existence of the Church. No adequate reason can be given for the duplication of such machinery. If the Church is really needed, it is because there is a definite and specific work for it to do, for which there is no provision among the other agencies of human society.

And if such need exists, the Church, to succeed, to fulfil its function and to bless mankind as it ought, must attend strictly to its separate and distinct calling. To venture off into outside and alien fields of labor, to try its hand at a great variety of humanitarian enterprises, excellent in themselves but already receiving attention and at best no part of its peculiar ministry, — to do this is to miss its one supreme opportunity and waste its precious energies, while leaving undone the one thing by which it might have greatly blessed the world.

The fact is, the Church exists because man has a soul that needs nurture, — worship, sympathy, love, hope, cultivation of the spiritual life. It does not exist to provide workshops, soup-

kitchens, or medical treatment. All these are necessary, but it is not this need that creates the Church. It is a Church to lead men to repentance, to give them faith in God, to provide them with high ideals, to equip them with motive power, to make them disciples of Jesus, — in short, to train them in the deep things of the spiritual life.

The Church must, first of all, provide abundant heart-life. If it does not accomplish this, it is no Church and humanity will go unserved and unblessed. If it succeeds in this respect, then a great many other things will follow. If it sends men out into the world with great hearts, pure hearts, and loving hearts, then, wherever human helpfulness is needed, this heart-life will spring into fruitful expression by innumerable forms.

If the Church shall fill a soul with love at its altar, then wherever that soul may be, the sufferer will be served and the sad will be cheered. If the Church shall make a heart glad by its uplifting worship, then the influences of such a regeneration will run the whole length of the street as a gladdening river of the water of life. This will do more to help the poor than dole of bread or gift of old clothes. If the Church shall create a conscience and put it into the breast of the corner grocer, then this will do more to bring in the kingdom of heaven in that neighborhood than many a free concert.

If the Church, by the sacred oracles of its pulpit, shall imbue a young man with the spirit of Jesus, then wherever he may go he will lead others from darkness to light.

Setting up a little more charitable machinery will not provide the needed motive power, but raising up a soul from sin and sorrow actually begins the regeneration of the community. The Church exists for one supreme purpose — to redeem souls. Only as it lifts the soul heavenward does it justify its existence and glorify both God and man.

VII WHAT THE CHURCH CONTRIBUTES

AS the Church of God is created and sustained by human need, its basis is as deep and broad and firm as that which underlies all other human institutions. Any interpretation of human nature that provides an adequate foundation for state, school, or laboratory will serve as cornerstone of the Church. Religious culture makes no more assumptions respecting nature and human nature than scientific discovery. The postulate of worship, that the human soul may feel after and find God, is as rational as the postulate of science, that there is an intelligible order in nature that the human reason can discover.

The conviction of the heart that its yearning for holiness or its plea for forgiveness really wins a response from the Infinite Heart is surely no more unreasonable; it makes no larger draft upon credulity than the assertion of the scientist that the peculiar line in the spectrum reports the presence of oxygen in the star which is millions upon millions of miles distant. The religious sentiment is a basic fact, like gravity and electricity, which the scientist must accept. The Church, as an organized expression of religious life, has as much warrant in human experience as any other institution that serves human need.

But we may go further than this. The Church contributes the supreme element which all other institutions need in order to reach their greatest worth and highest efficiency. The one thing needful comes more from the sanctuary than from any other source. When we visit the market-place and ask, What is most needed here for the success of trade, for the comfort and joy of buyer and seller, for the good of producer and consumer? only one answer is possible. The fact is obvious to all: the fundamental requisite of trade is not mere cunning, nor smartness, nor even quickness of mind; it is the moral element: fairness, truthfulness, honesty, — a good conscience before God and man. Successful business involves and implies ethics. These commercial relations of the world must be guided by a sense of right. It is easy enough to cheat men and sell them poor goods, but the goods go home with the purchaser, and soon they reveal the trick and publish the fraud.

Now, where are these indispensable moral qualities produced? What does most to create and train a conscience? Moral training is involved in all the experiences of life because we live in a moral universe. The ethical import and moral development incident to commerce and handicraft are evident. But after the most generous admissions are made respecting other departments of life, it is no exaggeration to claim that the Church does more than any other agency to evolve an effective moral sentiment and insure obedience to moral law.

It is in the Church that the Ten Commandments

are thundered forth, not simply with the authority of a human statute, but with the impressive sanction of Almighty God. And though Biblical science may trace their source to experience rather than to revelation, it is an ample experience that discloses the will of God written on tablets never broken! It is in the Church that righteousness is set forth with supreme power, not simply as a wise policy, but as an ever present and paramount duty, behind which lies the vast and irresistible momentum of the universe, because God is righteous. In the Church the Golden Rule is affirmed, not simply as a practical and prudential precept for daily conduct, but as the necessary guide to eternal life.

Religion affirms the Law of Love, not merely as an expedient rule for the passing day, but as the source and substance of real salvation, here and hereafter. All other moral trainings end with narrow temporal limits; the Church demands that men view their actions in the light of eternity. All other moral commands appeal to public opinion, the speech of the people, and the judgment of the neighborhood; the commands of religion bring the soul face to face with the Maker of heaven and earth. It is in the Church that men are most impressed with the deep sense of moral responsibility, for there alone are they trained under the eye of God and with reference to their future destiny. Therefore it is not an extreme claim that the Church does more than any other agency to create the conscience needed in the man who occupies the market-place. It is, therefore, the chief source of

that moral sentiment which is of supreme importance in trade.

The court-room, where a trial is in progress, presents the same condition of affairs. What do we demand that judge and jury shall possess? Legal knowledge and sound judgment; this is obvious. But if our life or property is at stake, we want the judge to have something more than a clear knowledge of the law, and the jurymen something in addition to the ability to read and write. Our safety and our fortune, in that trying experience, depend, not upon the mere craftiness of our attorney nor upon the mere intelligence of the court. We ourselves, and also the public, have one supreme interest: that judge and jury be true, honest, just men, — men whom no prejudice can pervert, and whom no bribe can influence. Our safety and the safety of the land hinge at one point: Have all these men a conscience? A commanding moral sense is the one supreme need. Judge and jury may lack many other things and not endanger the welfare of the community, but if a conscience is anywhere lacking, this lack will work injustice or misfortune.

Just here we find another illustration and evidence of the importance of the Church. This "one thing needful," a conscience, the Church does more to produce and provide than any other institution. The law itself implies a noble system of ethics, and the study of the law gives a fine moral training; and yet, it is chiefly the Church which puts an effective conscience in the men who sit on the bench

and in the jury-box. It is the appeal of religion to the infinite and eternal interests of human life, to God and destiny, that does most to develop, sustain, and vitalize the moral sense. In worship men are brought face to face with the Lawgiver of heaven and earth. In the congregation they are made to feel the moral responsibilities of life as nowhere else. By the teaching of the pulpit the heart is stocked with spiritual motive power. By the life and gospel of Jesus the soul is provided, not simply with an ethical code, but with *an ethical life!* In these ways the Church gives to the court what it most needs.

We have committed ourselves, as a people, to the educational method. This is well. The public enthusiasm for education is marvelous, the ambition for knowledge is universal. Wherever we go in America the schoolhouse dominates the landscape. It is the one building on which the pride of the whole community is centered. In the old time, castle and cathedral alone towered above the sky-line. They represented the supreme authorities and the chief interests of the people. The one furnished protection against human and temporal foes; the other, against Satanic and unseen enemies.

But more conspicuous to-day than the church spires is the uptowering, massive form of the public school building, — the castle which protects our liberties, the only shrine at which the children of all the people gather. The treasure of the land is poured out lavishly by public taxation and private

donation to create and support school and college, library and laboratory.

There may be grounds for criticism respecting the details of our system of common schools, for all educational methods are imperfect, and they are still in the process of evolution. And yet, no wise and loyal American ever regrets this wide and genuine interest in the education of the people. But the fact which needs especial emphasis here is this: The Church, when made what it ought to be, contributes the element which does most to give efficiency to the whole educational program, and it does most to produce the high ideals and the noble motives needed to direct the use of the knowledge imparted by the public school.

It is the Church which transforms mere information into the wisdom of life. It is chiefly the Church which generates the moral sentiment that must go hand in hand with culture, if human life is to be sane and sweet. It is the Church which provides the spiritual interpretation of life that teaches the soul what true success is and rescues the individual from the tyranny of materialism.

This contention is not a criticism upon the moral quality of the work of the public school, nor is it a plea that formal religion or didactic ethics be added to the already overcrowded curriculum of our schools. Let the school attend strictly to its specific work, and let its doors be forever kept free from the shadow of creedal statements and sectarian contestants. The need of the hour in education is not the introduction of catechisms, conservative

or radical, into our schools, but a more efficient Church that shall put more religion into the heart of every human being in the school. There ought to be a wider and deeper interest in the Church, that it may be successful in making teacher and pupil *more religious before they enter the schoolhouse!* If the Church is not doing all that it ought to do at this point it is because it does not receive adequate popular support. We must not blame the Church as an institution for any apparent failure in this respect, but visit our criticism upon the men outside who cripple it by their indifference.

The demands frequently made at present that Bible and creed be thrust upon our schools do injury to both the cause of education and the cause of piety. This movement does not go far enough back to reach the primary sources of our present trouble, nor does its influence reach down to the roots of the difficulty and provide an adequate remedy. The remedy lies, not in the direction of the school, but in the direction of the Church. A wider public interest in religion as represented by the Church, a more efficient administration of religion in the Church, and then every person in the school will be adequately equipped with piety. The Church must be held responsible for its own department, — the religious interests of mankind. To crowd this work upon the school means a threefold mistake: It will harm the school; it will injure religion; and it will depreciate the Church in the eyes of the community. It is a confession that the Church is a failure! What is needed is not only to hold the

Church responsible for the religious training of children, but more than this: To give it such a large and loyal support that children will actually possess all the elements of a sturdy piety.

If any one deplores the fact that the graduates of our educational institutions are not sufficiently religious, that they are not adequately equipped with moral qualities, let him direct his attention to the real source of the difficulty. Let him not strike at the school, but let him do what he can to make the Church all that it ought to be. If such persons would do their whole duty to the Church, giving it not only more money but more personal attention, not simply subscribing to its creed, but insisting that it have *a modern creed*, not merely honoring Jesus with lip-service, but putting his spirit into home and business, — then the children of the community would come out of the public schools with all needful moral qualities.

A more efficient Church, and then every school-teacher would have a vital piety vastly more helpful to pupils than scores of didactic "moral lessons." A more efficient Church, put in harmony with modern knowledge and made powerful enough to compel parents to realize their responsibilities for the religious training of their children, and then the moral product of the public schools would be greatly increased. If this were true, then the children, coming to it from religious homes and well furnished with moral ideals and motives, could easily be sent out into the world by the school with high ethical standards.

How unjust to condemn the public school for the irreligion of children, when parents do nothing in their homes to make them religious, either by precept or by example! How unjust to pass by the Sunday-schools and insist that the overtaxed public school do the work that belongs to them! If parents were more religious; if the Church were better supported; if the Sunday-schools were doing their work as well as the so-called "godless schools," then the product of our popular education would show different religious results. If children are becoming less and less religious, the main reason is that family life is not religious. And how can we expect it to be, when parents are so indifferent to the Church? The way to put more religion into our public schools is through the Church and its Sunday-school. If men and women were more deeply interested in the Church, and if they felt its transcendent importance as they ought, the religious training of children would receive adequate attention. This done, and these vast benefits would come to home, school, and state.

To the earnest plea now so often heard, that there ought to be more vital piety, more ethical life in our schools, every one assents. But the problem is, How shall it be put there? Surely, there is only one way. It must come in through flesh and blood. That which is dynamic with moral power in the schoolroom is not blackboard and text-book but the personality of the teacher. It is the task of the Church to make the heart of the teacher truly religious before she goes into the

schoolroom. This done, and the school will be a training room of the spirit, though neither rites nor dogmas are present.

What makes certain the hundredfold harvest of education? Not simply the seed of truth sown by the teacher, but the well-prepared soil of the pupil's nature — previously prepared by the ministry of religion. The child will not come out of the school irreligious if sent to the school by the Church and the home with a rational faith. It is the spiritual element furnished by the Church that makes education most valuable and gives to culture its finest quality. Therefore every lover of education ought to be most anxious to reenforce the work of the school by the spiritual element which is indispensable to its noblest fruitage, and which the Church alone furnishes. And if the Church makes this invaluable contribution, we must give to it our best energies and our largest efforts.

It is true that religious training and secular instruction should go hand in hand; one is not complete without the other. But it does not follow that both must be given by the same person or in the same place. In fact, the exact opposite is nearer the truth. We have the Church as a distinct institution to provide religious nurture. That is its special task, and therefore its methods are spiritual rather than secular. We also have the school as a separate institution to provide secular knowledge. That is its peculiar work, and therefore its methods are different from those of the Church because its work is different. Each does its work

tributions of the Church to the home. It stands guard over its sanctities; it ministers to all its highest needs; it chastens all its joys and lessens all its sorrows; it crowns its mistress with honor and blesses its children with tenderness; and it fills it perpetually with the melody of faith, hope, and love. All this the Church is constantly doing for every family, so far as the family will yield itself to its influence.

May we not, therefore, rightfully press this question urgently and forcibly upon the attention of every individual: What are you doing for the Church which is doing so much for the interests that are indescribably dear to you? Is it manly for you to receive all these blessings and do nothing for the institution that bestows them? You enjoy a quiet Sabbath and realize that it is the supreme protector of the home; then do your best to help the Church to maintain this great blessing. It will not long continue unless loyal and heroic hearts support it. You rejoice in a true and noble wife; then do your best to sustain the Church, which is her most powerful friend. You have a beautiful home that is your pride and joy; then do your best to strengthen the Church, which does more than anything else to make that beautiful home possible. Whoever cares for the home, let him also care for the Church, its greatest friend, protector, and benefactor.

VIII ILLUSTRATIONS OF VALUE

A PROMINENT leader of organized labor has recently used the following language: "What service are ministers rendering to the working classes? Might they not find some outlet for their energies of greater value to society? The clergyman, unfortunately, does not touch the life of the worker closely enough to make him feel that the Church is of any importance!" This opinion is probably shared by a large number of the so-called "laboring classes." They do not feel that the minister is of any real service to the world. He is perhaps an ornament but not a necessity.

This view is a part of the wide-spread materialistic interpretation of life which constitutes the socialistic program that is enthusiastically advocated, not only by many artisans but by some professional men. From this point of view the work of the minister does not seem to be of any real benefit to mankind. If we judge him at short range simply by an economic standard, he is, apparently, little more than a cumberer of the ground. If human life is merely a question of wages and creature comforts, the clerical calling cannot justify itself. The ministry as a "cure of souls" is an impertinence, if man is a soulless creature. If the chief end of life is to satisfy appetites there is

no warrant for the pulpit. If all that men need are "worldly goods," then the spiritual good for which the Church stands has no importance.

It is really this mood of mind, and not, as a rule, any actual social exclusiveness, as so frequently asserted, that keeps so many of the laboring classes away from the sanctuary. They do not care for the Church, because it does not have the "goods" that they desire to possess. If the clergyman does not closely touch the life of the worker it is not his fault. He does his best to lay hold of the laborer, but he eludes his grasp. We hear it said that artisans in general feel that their clothes are not fine enough to allow them to attend church. But the clothes that they do have are no bar to theatergoing, and what is good enough to wear to the play ought to be sufficiently good for the pew.

We are also told that they shun the church because no one in it will recognize a poor man in these days. But some of us are old-fashioned enough to feel that the main object in going to church is not to receive social recognition, but to worship Almighty God! We cannot imagine for a moment that the Puritan was kept away from his church by his clothes or by the lack of social recognition. No, these are only pretenses invented to cover a lack of religious interest. As a rule, ministers and deacons would rejoice to see a multitude of humble people crowding their churches. In fact, they are now nearly all using every sort of device *to reach the masses!*

But the masses shun the church, so far as they do shun it, because they do not care for the things that it represents; the bar that keeps them out is in their own hearts. The only way to bring them back into its pews is not to meet them on their own level, and try to attract them by adding "a pie-counter" to the sanctuary (to put the matter bluntly and crudely), but to convince them that the Church has a supreme *good* which they sorely need, without which the mere "goods" of life are of little value.

The clergyman does not touch the life of the worker, we are told. Let us see. On the border of the small city lives the poor widow, recently left to fight the hard battle of life alone. The children are plucking at her skirts constantly and calling for bread; their hunger is seldom fully satisfied, and their bodies are always cold. Every night she lies down weary to the verge of exhaustion and discouraged to the point of despair. Every morning she begins her drudgery with the same old heart-ache that wastes her life. She often murmurs, "Life is so hard, so forlorn, so joyless! Why prolong the agony?"

But some day the minister, from his watch-tower of brooding love, discovers this desolate home and visits it. He does not go there as a mere individual but as the representative of the corporate life of his congregation. He is the ambassador, not only of Christ, but of a brotherhood of Christians. He enters that home, not with the sympathy of one heart, but as the agent of a community of hearts.

He carries with him not only his own helping hand, but behind him are the outstretched hands of a multitude. He goes into that hovel, not as a mere neighbor with a human message, but as a minister of the gospel with the authority of God, — natural and rational, but real and effective. He represents more than any charity agent or member of a lodge or fraternity can possibly take into that desolate home, however noble their errands of mercy may be. He goes anointed with power from on high: in the name of Jesus, which is the mightiest name in the world; in the name of the Church, which is the mightiest institution among men; and in the name of God the Father, faith in whom is the mightiest solvent of our sorrows and the supreme source of our hope and heroism.

No other person can visit that family in distress who is so fully equipped as the minister with what its members, from mother to youngest child, most need: a love that is human love, glorified by the love of God; a spiritual interest that looks through the rags that clothe the body to the immortal soul; a warmth of affection that will not only warm their home but that will both warm and re-create their hearts; a grace of Christian helpfulness more valuable than any worldly good, for, after we have given ourselves to our suffering friends, and brought them to their best selves, all the "mere things" needed will swiftly follow.

The minister leads that woman out of her doubt, despair, and degradation. He brings her into the large fellowship of human sympathy provided by

the Church, and he makes her feel the divine helpfulness of the Christian faith which he represents. Christian love swiftly weaves her life and her home into the web of saintly affection and comradeship. Deep down within her heart the smokeless flame of Christian faith that casts no shadow is relighted. Unto her weakness is added the strength and cheer of the corporate life of the Church. The "goods" of life abundantly follow, but best of all is the changed destiny of the children, from a condition of misery, where they were a constant menace to society, to useful and happy lives. Whoever watches this transformation will gladly sing a *jubilate!*

Now, may we not ask, Is not such a service as this one that blesses the common laborer? Is not the rescue of these children from criminal careers an industrial benefit? Is not the salvation of this family from imminent beggary an economic gain? What increase in the wages of any man in that neighborhood can compare in practical importance with the increase of life in that home? Is not the man who brings all this to pass entitled to as much consideration as the "walking delegate"? Is not the organization that keeps the minister in the field to accomplish just such results as worthy of praise for doing something *practical* for humanity as the labor union? And every one who knows what the labors of the minister really are is aware that similar works of mercy and of helpfulness are the constant employment of his heart and hand. This is by no means an exceptional case, but an

ordinary incident in the daily routine of his "cure of souls."

Another incident, not uncommon, will illustrate a different line of usefulness. It will present another justification of the ministerial office from the point of view of *economic value!* Some Sunday during morning service, a young man wanders aimlessly through an open church door and sinks unnoticed into a back pew, — a thoughtless, wayward, selfish fellow, on the highway to an evil life that probably will end in a criminal career if no change of heart occurs.

But something in the spirit or atmosphere of the place arrests his attention. A strong, manly word from the preacher's lips goes straight to his heart. The pleading tones of the prayer at the close set the chords of his soul vibrating, and its yearning for pardon and peace becomes, unawares, his own personal petition. The tender hymn that follows stirs inner depths that have been untouched for years. He feels the thrill and uplift of a new experience. He remembers the story of the prodigal. He recalls the words of Jesus that he learned in his boyhood at his mother's knee — waiting all the while for the dews of heavenly grace to fall on them that they might grow and blossom. In memories dimmed by tears he sees the anxious face of that mother just before she closed her eyes for the last long sleep.

By the illumination of the Inner Light this young man sees his misspent years, painted in a panorama full of shadows. He realizes now that he has had

no real happiness during all those pleasure-seeking days. The pampered animal is never satisfied, and a growing selfishness always means an increasing sorrow. The pleading voice of the preacher will not leave his ears; the face of his mother will not leave his memory; the words of Jesus will not leave his heart. The inner depths are flushed with the beseeching Spirit of God, and the waters of repentance flow forth to purify and enrich. The weak will leaps forth upon the stage of life with the strength of an athlete and triumphantly declares, "I will be a true man." In the mighty rhythm of a new heart-beat, a faith in spiritual verities, born of the Spirit of God, mounts the throne, and that young man goes forth into the world to live a new life; to be a loyal disciple of Jesus; to be an honorable citizen; to make a noble record for industry, integrity, and purity.

Now, is this radical change in the life of the young man of no practical importance? Has this change no economic value? Is this product of the preacher's art of prophecy and persuasion useless? Did any artisan ever make so substantial a contribution to the community as that morning church service, measuring it by whatever standard? Is this new manhood too remote from the life of the workers to be appreciated? Is this turning from drink to sobriety, from idleness to industry, from incipient criminality to character-making, — is all this too vague and intangible to benefit the "laboring classes"? Ask the father of this young man what the change in his son is worth to him. Will

he measure it in lands, or even in silver and gold?

The critic of the Church, speaking for certain labor organizations, contends that the minister must justify his life of leisure by showing that his services have given his fellow men important economic advantages! Just as though the minister's is *a life of leisure!* As a matter of fact, he is as truly a *workman* as any "hewer of wood or drawer of water." To work on the soul and mold character is true labor as much as to drive nails or to dig a ditch. And is not the minister really serving humanity when he rescues a brother from ruin? True service to humanity does not stop when we provide food and clothes. There are some other things — temperance, truthfulness, honesty, heroism — that are of great worth to the world, even to the world of trade and commerce.

The laborer must himself be something more than a mere workman to be an efficient craftsman. The needed spiritual elements have a large economic value. It is for these that the Church stands and the minister serves. It is not necessary that the clergyman marshal a crowd of witnesses at the bar of a labor union to show cause why he should not be sent to the chain-gang. Only those who are blind to the spiritual side of life fail to appreciate the important fruits of his sacred office. And undoubtedly the vast majority of laboring men see this fact as clearly and feel it as keenly as any one else.

If we turn our attention for a moment in another

direction we shall find abundant illustrations of the invaluable contributions of the Church to human society. The following interesting incident is not an isolated case, but a part of the daily routine of religious work. Two brothers had been partners in business, but unfortunately they quarreled and separated. The disagreement between them grew bitter and unseemly. The quarrel became the scandal of the town. It separated their families and friends into rival camps arrayed in enmity against one another. What a heartache it brought to the aged mother, who, on this account, could not have her two sons in her house at the same time! These brothers occasionally attended the same church, but their presence at the same time was an embarrassment, and they themselves found it difficult to enjoy the gospel in the same meeting-house.

But one Sunday morning the minister, not having them in mind, preached on "forgiveness: human and divine." He described forgiveness as a wide-spread and precious grace which occupies a prominent place in every large and noble character. He traced the teachings of forgiveness widely through the scriptures of all the great religions of the world, showing in this way its broad historic basis and its great spiritual authority. He clearly explained Christ's teaching respecting God's forgiveness of man, making it clear that the Father's forgiveness of us is dependent in a large measure upon our forgiveness of our enemies: "Forgive us *our* trespasses as *we* forgive those who trespass against us." He closed with a

simple but tender and touching description of the wonderful pathos and power of those dying hours on the cross, when Jesus forgave his enemies even to the uttermost — type and symbol of the forgiving spirit that we must ever display in the dark crises of our life if we are to be his true and loyal disciples.

As the congregation was passing out at the close of the impressive service, the two brothers met face to face in the vestibule. As each looked into the eyes of the other he saw a new light shining there, — a radiant glow of love that shines not from land or sea or star, but from the mountain heights within, where the divine Spirit touches and lights the human heart. Their hands met, their lips moved: "Let us go and see mother"! As they walked the street arm in arm to her house, the people of the town realized that a blessed thing had happened: long sundered hearts were reconciled and reunited; the scandal of the town was now at an end; a notable and inspiring example of forgiveness was forcibly set forth to influence all lives for good; and best of all, the heartache of an aged mother was turned into indescribable gladness.

Now, can there be any doubt about the great value to the community of the morning service in that little church? Difficult perhaps to measure it in terms of a daily wage, but not difficult to measure it in terms of human happiness. The incident represents an increase of real life which is more than meat or raiment. Hard, perhaps, to justify it from a purely economic standpoint, but easy

to trace its enriching influence upon human lives. And the best things in life are not our physical *economies* but our spiritual excellences. There are many things which cannot be measured in the coin of the realm; they are beyond all financial computation because they belong to the kingdom of heaven.

It is not necessary to go far afield to show that the ministry of religion, which accomplishes such results as this simple incident illustrates, blesses the whole community, and necessarily the lives of all humble toilers. No one is really more largely profited by the spiritual uplift of human life than they; no one is more abundantly blessed by the more ethical conduct of mankind than this very class. Of all persons, the laborer is most deeply benefited by the widest and strictest observance of the moral law. If any one ought to be keenly interested in the spiritual condition of society, it is surely the common workman, who, being destitute of privilege and property, needs the protection of those great ideals and sentiments of piety which insist that justice and righteousness shall be done to all men regardless of rank or condition.

"The minister does not touch the life of the laborer" we are told. Why so? Because he does not help him to shorter hours and larger wages? So little does the labor-leader understand the deep needs of human life, even the life of his companion in toil! So little does he understand what is most practical, — the religious convictions that make the hand true, the tongue docile, the heart glad, and the will strong! So little does he understand

the actual work of the minister, — the contributions of hope, faith, and love, of entreaty and encouragement which *do* touch the innermost depths of life, even the life of the humblest, where the influence of mere money never penetrates! So little does he understand what the actual sources of human happiness and civic welfare really are! His economic yardstick is too crude a measure to determine the worth of those things in the world that make life most worth living.

The importance of the Church lies just here: It puts into human life a joy, a strength, and a nobility that are precious and permanent. This spiritual equipment of life, provided by religion, is not given in equal measure or effectiveness by any other agency. This spiritual expansion of the life of the individual does make him a vastly more valuable "economic agent," for at bottom our economic value is ethical.

And when some representative of labor, surely not the best representative, demands that the Church be closed and that the minister leave the pulpit and find some outlet for his energies of greater value to society, he speaks without regard to the basic facts of life. He does not speak wisely for labor itself. If he would only see things as they really are; if he would free himself from the materialism that cheapens manhood; if he would put aside the cant phrases of his mere industrialism; if he would go deep enough into the human breast to find the son of God whose needs are more than wages; and if he would be scientific enough

to take account of the spiritual factors which shape conduct and provide peace, — then, perhaps, he would learn that the minister can find no other outlet for his energies that will produce results of greater value to society than the services in which he is engaged and that create and direct the motive powers of civilization.

IX MORE NEEDED THAN EVER

THERE are many people who appreciate the Church as a historical institution, but they feel that its day of usefulness is at an end. It was once helpful, like castles and thrones; but as they are fast giving place to Democracy, so, too, the Church will surely disappear. Civic, educational, and philanthropic agencies will in the future better perform the functions that ecclesiastical establishments formerly carried forward.

On the other hand, a careful and scientific study of the basic facts of modern life, its greatest problems and its gravest dangers, will make it clear to every thoughtful person that the need of the Christian Church is greater to-day than ever before. The recent changes in the world instead of rendering it useless really enlarge its sphere and emphasize its importance. Present conditions instead of calling for the abandonment of the Church make increasing demands for a better and a stronger Church. Its existing shortcomings are incidental; its real worth and importance are permanent. The true ministry of the Church has not been taken over by any of the newly organized agencies of modern society. No adequate substitute for its worship, its prophecy, or its corporate life on the high plane of man's utmost spiritual-

ity has been devised, and none is likely to be invented.

I. The very facts to which appeal is often made to show that the Church is outgrown, when thoroughly studied, actually prove the greater need of this institution. It is frequently asserted, for instance, that education has become so general that the pulpit is no longer needed to teach men the truths of history and science. The modern man acquires knowledge in other and better ways, — from the school and from the press.

But this view of the case is based upon the radically false assumption that the Church exists simply to impart information. This is not, however, its peculiar task, nor is learning man's chief need. The part of the problem of life to which religion is related and for which the Church labors, is the training of people in reverence, love, hope, — the Spiritual Ideal; and all this still belongs specifically to the Church. Nothing else has arisen to serve mankind along these lines. These supreme needs have not been outgrown; the vital ministry of religion that meets them is as important as ever.

In truth, the needs and the opportunities of the Church are now greater than ever before. Just because discovery has recently poured upon us a flood of new and important facts from every nook and corner of the universe and human history, there is increased necessity that the conduct value, the moral import, the spiritual significance of these facts be brought home to men and applied to life. All this secular knowledge must be vitalized, incar-

nated, and organized into character and civility. This is not, and never can be, the peculiar task of school, laboratory, or shop, however much they may incidentally do in this direction.

The spiritual interpretation of all scientific facts, and their application to the conduct of life, is specifically the work of the minister, who speaks in the name of God and with solemn reference to man's immortality. What the astronomer sees through the telescope he puts down carefully in his sidereal chart. The preacher takes this inert fact and uses it to move human hearts to a nobler worship; he translates the mystery of the heavens into an uplift of heavenly life. What the biologist discovers as he traces the marvelous transformations of microscopic forms, he publishes to the world, and so helps the farmer to raise larger crops or the doctor to fight disease — all beneficent uses of knowledge. But there are still higher uses. The prophet makes these facts report the method and presence of the Infinite God, and out of them he fetches, not only a deepening sense of mystery, but also a clearer recognition of the profound obligations of human life. What the historian uncovers respecting the evolution of human society, as he turns the pages of faded manuscript or digs in the ruins of buried cities, he places among the treasures of library or museum. The minister of the gospel takes up these illustrations of distant civilizations, and makes them contribute powerful lessons in behalf of the universality of the religious sentiment and the supremacy of the moral law.

It is the office of science to discover truth; it is the function of the Church to make all facts live in the lives of men. The one illuminates the face of nature; the other vitalizes human hearts with ethical motives. Therefore, the more truth scientific discovery may present to the world, the greater the need of the Church to make this truth effective and productive in human character. The swifter the progress of knowledge, the larger the necessity and the opportunity of the minister.

And probably one of the chief reasons of the present weakness of the Church is the fact that so many ministers have not come out into the real modern world and laid hold of its vast resources and applied them to human life in behalf of piety and morality, as ought to have been done. Overburdened with fading traditions and fettered by archaic forms, clergymen have often spoken in feeble and faltering tones, when in fact the world is full of newly discovered truths that reveal God more fully than ever before, and that ought to have been used to enforce moral law. The permanent duty of the Church is to transform truth into life, and the present increase of knowledge enlarges this duty.

II. As the stress and strain of human life increase, the Church is more and more needed to cheer, to comfort, and to console. The faster the speed of the train the greater the danger of hot boxes. When we double the pressure of life, we quadruple the need of recreation. The more we rush for steam and electric cars the longer our vacations must be. As the demands in office, shop, and study

multiply, it is clear that we must pay more attention to the recuperative agencies that protect us against the dangers incident to such excessive demands. Wherever we look to-day, what sad wreckage we see strewn along every shore! The harder the winds of adversity blow, the more need of life-saving stations. The mad rush of modern life, much of it wholly unnecessary, is indescribably sad and terrifically ruinous.

It is the peculiar and important office of the Church to meet these conditions from both sides: to moderate the maddened pace and also to relieve those who become exhausted; to prevent the hot box, if possible, and also to rescue sufferers from the wreckage when disaster occurs; to lessen the stress in time so that the "brain storm" may not gather, and also to lift up the fallen when the ruin of life comes. Into this fever-stricken, storm-swept, wreck-strewn world, the Church must send both its restraining and its comforting word; both its apostles with stern warnings and its life-saving crews; both its firm hand to hold in check and its loving heart to sympathize.

Every hour that religion can detain men in its sanctuary, the risk of nervous collapse or moral delinquency is lessened. But more than prevention is necessary, for thick about its doors are those who are prostrate and need its ministry of mercy. Every authoritative restraint that piety can put upon men to moderate their excessive speed of living will increase their happiness and prolong their lives. But more than this is needed, for not far off

are those whom it must seek and save — save by the love of Him who reveals the love of God. Every time the minister can induce men to lift their eyes from the vexations and worries of the passing moment and look for a time toward the glowing horizon of eternity, the clearer will be the vision of their rested minds and the stronger the rhythm of their heart-beats. But he must also remember that near every altar are the desolate ones from whose eyes love must wipe the bitter tears and from whose heart hope must chase the shadows of doubt and despair.

These ministries of religion become more and more necessary as civilization grows more complex. The demand for recreation increases as the waste of life extends. But the important consideration is this: To provide a recreation that really *re-creates!* Here is the mischief of many cheap amusements: They destroy and degrade, instead of bringing peace and recuperation. But church-going even as a recreation has a supreme value: it restores vitality and replenishes strength. The exhilaration of worship never entails lassitude; the exercise of sympathy never exhausts; the activity of love never prostrates.

How many throng the theater to escape the misery of life! They find an opiate that deadens pain, but no peace that abides. If preventive sanitation is better than medicine, so, likewise, a religious training that prevents the waste and enlarges the content of life is infinitely better than mere pastimes that cheapen life. The woe of the world

is more prevented by worship than by the drama. The diseased or distracted soul is more helped by prayer and anthem than by the stage. The greater the rush of the modern world, the more the Church is needed to moderate and chasten the desires of mankind and to repair the havoc wrought by excessive labor and worry.

III. The Church is more needed to-day than ever before, because the world is in greater need of that which it is especially set apart to produce and provide, — stronger and nobler motives. Modern industries require a motive power a millionfold larger than what was in use a century ago. How long would mill and factory, train and ship, run on the energies that were operative in the world of commerce when Fulton made his trial trip on the Hudson River? So, too, the financial operations of the present day involve vast and perplexing problems of which our ancestors were ignorant.

Our captains of industry confront complex moral issues that were not dreamed of in New Testament times. Our capitalists who handle the traffic of the land have to pass judgment upon the ethics of transactions that are intricate and confusing. Our municipalities are engaged in gigantic enterprises where temptations are strong and opportunities for plunder are large. Our competitive system seems, at times, little better than a cruel war of extermination. Even our courts often find it difficult to draw the line between what is right and what is wrong, so tangled and obscure are the clashing interests of trade.

In view of these facts, it is no wonder that there is much and serious corruption in the land. No catalogne of the crimes of "high finance," no description of the moral laxity in the world of trade or of labor, no sickening list of municipal or legislative briberies need be given here. The facts, all too abundant and often too sensationally described, terrify us by their number and appal us by their magnitude.

Evidently the temptations of life have outrun the moral ability to resist them. The evolution of conscience has not kept pace with the deepening problems of civilization. The ethical motives which were sufficient to master the simple affairs of the old town meeting are not strong enough to guide a man through the fiery ordeals of a municipal council where millions of dollars are at stake. Property has accumulated so fast in many hands, and many have now such immense fortunes, that the moral equipment coming from the past is incapable of coping with the allurements which this suddenly acquired wealth brings. Business problems have developed faster than the moral character. Many a man has gone down to ruin because his bank account has grown beyond his moral capacity to use his money sanely and justly. To be as good as our fathers were we need an ethical equipment much larger than theirs. It ought to be commensurate with our material progress. As a matter of fact, we are suffering from a surplus of things and a shrinkage of spirit.

In certain directions, our progress in morality

has been decided and encouraging. We are more tender, more tolerant, more sympathetic than our ancestors. The large group of precious sentiments that may be called *humanitarian* have expanded wonderfully in recent years. But the sterner and more heroic ethical qualities, — justice, integrity, honesty, respect for law, for age, for the sanctity of home and church, — these have lessened. How many men with "swollen fortunes" are excessively charitable with the proceeds of their commercial piracy! And the public conscience has been so *commercialized* that the gift of a million dollars to a hospital leads our people to condone all the rascalities of the giver!

It certainly needs no gift of prophecy to see that ruin, deep and tragic, will overtake us unless a conscience is shortly developed among us capable of resisting these new temptations: a moral sense strong enough to guide men safely through the stress and strain of these trying days; an ethical motive powerful enough to insure a more honest acquisition and a more rational use of riches. The old-fashioned basic qualities of honor and honesty are everywhere our supreme need. The increasing paganism of America is no mere fear or fancy of a timorous pessimist. The thunder-heads of a coming storm are on our civic and social horizons. He who will not see them and do what he can to avert the impending storm is either unfortunately blind or criminally indifferent.

Now, the Church is imperatively needed to give men just this ethical equipment: to bring up the

moral development of the race and make it commensurate with the progress of science and the accumulation of property. We suffer to-day because the heart does not command with an authority equal to that of the head; because the purse is too long for the conscience; because the hand that gathers is unrestrained by the soul that ought to insist on justice and honesty. What religion must do through the Church in order to save us is to evolve a conscience that will match the progress of trade; that will consecrate and command every dollar in the purse. It must evolve a moral sentiment that shall be sufficiently strong to hold property to the obligations inherent in social order and imposed by the moral law. It must create a spiritual power that shall be adequate for the varied and intricate problems of modern life. It must develop a character that shall be able to resist the gigantic temptations of the hour and keep men and women loyal to the highest ideals.

The Church is the one institution especially set apart and preeminently qualified "to teach this Western Goth that nothing pays but God"! There never was a time in the history of the world when the Church was a greater necessity than at present, because human society was never in more need of the moral quality which it contributes to man's life. Not more legislative statutes, but more of the spiritual convictions of a rational piety; not more luxuries, but more of the ethical motives that flow from the Christian nurture of the Church; not more wealth, but more of the moral

power bestowed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, — this is the one supreme preparation for life to-day.

The Church may not give greater wage-earning capacity to the fingers, but it provides something vastly better: the capacity to use wages to increase the real joy and nobility of life. The Church may not teach the student the method of coral building or the mechanism of a robin's song, but it teaches more important lessons: the method of character-building and the dynamics of that song of love that fills the world with the divinest music. The Church may not produce " captains of industry " who can corner the world's markets and compel nations to pay millions of tribute-money, but it makes more valuable contributions to the human race, — hearts that so feel the presence of God and the sanctity of man that commerce becomes honorable trade, and, in place of tribute cruelly exacted, blessings are widely bestowed. The importance of the Church of God increases as civilization advances. It cannot be outgrown because men can never live in peace and prosperity without the ideals and motives which it provides.

Here and there, even in young America, may be seen the abandoned village. Some years ago a goodly stream came down the valley from the distant wooded hills. A dam was built across the stream. A mill or factory was erected by its side. The rushing waters and the swiftly moving machinery began to sing the song of a prosperous industry. People quickly gathered, houses were

constructed, and presently a thriving hamlet filled the open space at the foot of the valley.

Then the ravenous woodsman with his ax and the careless camper with his fire began to make havoc in the distant forest. The great trees came crashing down one after another. The dry underbrush soon burned like tinder, and lurid fires lighted up many an autumnal evening sky. Little by little the great rocks of the hills began to show, bare and brown, like elbows through a worn garment. The trees of the Lord had vanished; the crown of glory had faded away. The passing rain-clouds went swiftly by and let fall but little moisture. The upreaching arms of the forest were no longer there to pull down the rain-drops. The showers threatened, but the clouds withheld their treasure. Even the waters that fell ran swiftly away, making sudden freshets of short duration, but no steady and constant current. The mossy pockets, the fern-bound cups, the porous earth, interlaced with the roots and shaded by the branches of the trees, — all these were gone, so that there was nothing to hold back and keep in reserve the waters that did fall.

After a time the stream began to dwindle. It was difficult to get power enough to drive the machinery. Later the mill was idle days at a time. A family here and there moved away, and soon vacant houses were common. After a time the wheel stopped, never to turn again. Finally a freshet tore away the mill-dam; stores closed one after another; lawless hands broke the windows of un-

used school and church; fences toppled over; and before long the streets were deserted lanes of grass and weeds. Destruction of the trees on the distant heights, of which no one had thought at the time, caused, as the years passed, the ruin of the prosperous village and all its homes and industries.

Down from the heights of life, where uptower to heaven the great ideals of faith and hope, of duty and destiny, come the mighty currents of power that turn the wheels of human life, that furnish motive to all the machinery of civilization. While they stand bright and strong the channels are everywhere full. While they stand, there is momentum from heaven sufficient to move men toward the kingdom of heaven. While they stand, a vital tide fills every heart, a quickening energy works through every hand. While they stand, it is easy for men to be generous, unselfish, heroic; temptations are powerless, while wealth is gained honorably and used justly. While they stand, there is inspiration to devise and ambition to produce the raiments of peace and the garments of praise. As long as these supreme ideals crown and command the hills of the Lord within, every lowly duty and every needed service are easily performed.

But these ideals on the heights, so precious and so powerful, — what of them? From what seed do they spring? In what soil are they rooted? By what methods do they grow, and by what means are they fostered? Their influence is needed wherever men gather to trade and wherever commerce spreads its traffic; but they are not produced by barter or

handicraft. Their power is felt wherever students congregate; but they are not the product of chemical analysis or historical research. Their inspiration glorifies the home, and by its domestic sanctities they are refreshed and strengthened, but their roots run deeper than family ties, and their blessing flows beyond the temporal bounds of the home into the eternity of God.

It is religion that plants, protects, and fosters these glorious ideals. It is religion that crowns the inner heights of the soul with spiritual beauty and ethical power. It is religion that fills all the channels of our being with an overflowing current of the water of life, capable of propelling all the machinery of our daily duties. It is religion that brings down from high heaven the commanding motives that move hero, saint, and martyr over desert places and along thorny paths to the supreme victories of loving self-sacrifice.

It is the Church, as an organism of religious sentiment, that generates and distributes the impulses of the heart that make for righteousness. The forest of spires bring down the showers of heavenly grace that move men to heavenly services. It is the Church, as the public administrator of the commanding convictions respecting God, Duty, and Immortality, that propels the arterial tides that give vigor and joy to our common life. It is the Church, as the representative of Jesus Christ, that equips human hearts with the Christian spirit, which means a glorious service of love here, and a more glorious life of love hereafter.

Let the Church decline and die, cut down the great ideals and burn off the tender pieties upon the heights where soul and Oversoul meet in vital communion, and what will then happen? What is even now happening? The springs will be dry and the channels empty. Destroy the faith that lays hold of God, uproot the love of Jesus that makes men loving, demolish the convictions of moral responsibility, trample into the dust of a sordid materialism the precious sentiments of sanctity, devour with the fires of selfish greed and lust the noble standards of justice and mercy, and overthrow the hope that reaches up to heaven, and then — what? Desolation will fast sweep down all the smiling valleys of life!

The motives that turn the wheels of daily life, making the sweet music of a noble conduct, — the inspirations that prompt self-sacrifice, the force of will that resists temptations and compels obedience to truth and justice, the aspirations that create character and guide handicraft, — all these will vanish, and the soul of man will become desolate like the abandoned hamlet if religion withers and the Church perishes. It is life on the heights that makes real life on the lower levels possible.

The neglect of the Church means vastly more than thoughtless people often imagine. The destruction of the divine ideals that humanize men, and the decay of the sublime enthusiasms that evangelize the world, will bring irreparable loss to society and incalculable sorrow to the individual. If, on the other hand, the Church is made all that

it ought to be, as the representative of the spirit of Jesus and as the source of a noble ethical Idealism, then the mighty streams of its healing and creative influence will give purity and gladness to the hearts of men.

The chief sources of the motives needed to operate successfully the vast and complicated machinery of modern life are those that are opened by the ministrations of a sincere and spiritual piety. Through them flows the grace of God. The solution of our serious problems, civic and personal, lies, not in any industrial reorganization of the world, but in a new spiritual dynamic operative in the heart; for out of it are the issues of life. The Church of God stands for the soul; and the soul is supreme and eternal.

X SINNERS INSIDE AND SAINTS OUTSIDE

IN any discussion of the importance of the Church and its claims upon the attention of people, we must never forget that there are many persons who hold views directly opposite to those so far presented in these pages. Some of these, who are critical or indifferent, are most estimable citizens. They are deeply interested in the welfare of mankind, having high moral ideals and a noble civic spirit. But from a variety of causes they have been led to look with disfavor upon the Christian Church. The character of some ministers known to them, their experiences with certain "professing Christians," or the barrenness and pettiness of the churches in their own community, — these and other things have alienated them from organized religion. There are such people in every community to whom the Church is not only unattractive, but to whom it seems a useless if not a harmful institution.

There are not a few persons in this general class who scoff at the imperfections and shortcomings of church-members. They point with something of contempt to the obvious fact that some of the worst people in the world are attendants, if not members, of the Church, while some of the very best

people in every community never attend a public religious service. There is enough truth in this criticism to arrest attention and arouse debate. But the fact, unfortunate as it is, does not weaken a single plea or overthrow a single argument which has been advanced in behalf of the Church. A similar charge may be made with equal truth against all human organizations. All clubs, lodges, and societies are open to the same criticism. There are sinners in them all, because all are composed of imperfect human beings; and there are as noble people outside every one as can be found inside any of them. In fairness, all associations must be judged, not by exceptional cases, but by their general character and influence.

We may easily find a case parallel to the Church in the school. We all know that some of the most incompetent men in the world are college graduates, while some of the wisest and greatest men have had almost no educational advantages. Two of the most notable instances in our own country are Franklin and Lincoln. But is it a just inference to conclude from these examples of greatness without college training that schools are worthless and education a mistake? Few would be so rash as to make such an assertion. And yet, this is just the position taken by those who condemn the Church because some of its members are very imperfect, while some of the best men are outside its fold.

Two important truths must here be taken into account. First: The school at best can only develop the native possibilities of the individuals with

whom it deals. It cannot create capacities. No college can make a superior scholar out of a man with an inferior brain. The stone-cutter is not to blame if he fails to give a quartz crystal the luster of a diamond. The college must not be expected to make a first-class man out of a third-class boy. The teacher must be judged by what he accomplishes with the mind put in his charge. He is not responsible for the quality of that mind. That some college graduates are incompetent proves, not that the college is worthless, but rather that some worthless young men are sent to college.

The same is true of the Church. It does the best that it can, like the college, with the human beings who enter its walls. It cannot reasonably be expected to make a great saint out of every sordid soul in the congregation. The test is, Does the sordid soul, as a rule, become less sordid by being in the Church? Its ministry is justified if it washes away some native impurities and represses some lower impulses. Its work must be judged with reference to the quality of the people with whom it deals. It is too much to expect that the Church will instantaneously destroy all the evil tendencies of imperfect human hearts, or that it will at once transform selfish natures into perfect men, or that it will constantly keep the average soul on the high levels of the Christian life. To have thrilled brutish hearts, even now and then, with a noble impulse; to have kept wayward feet in the strait and narrow way nine days out of ten; to have made thoughtless men and women believe in God and obey

the gospel a part of the time, — is not that worth while? And all this the Church actually accomplishes. The true test, like that applied to the school, is this: Not how far its members fall short of perfection, but how far, as a rule, they have been lifted out of their imperfections.

Second: We must remember that the so-called self-made man, who becomes great without direct contact with schools, does not disprove the value of education. He, too, is indirectly a product of the schools. We all owe what we are to the grace of God received directly or indirectly through the educational processes of the ages. There would have been no Abraham Lincoln had there been no American colleges. He fed upon the culture that the colleges had produced. He was never within their walls, but he was constantly within the reach of their influence. He had books and newspapers, companions and associates, and into all these the life of the schools had flowed. A thousand such agencies were the channels by which the colleges of America touched and trained his heart and mind, indirectly, but not the less effectively.

Suppose that Lincoln, as a babe, had been taken into the wilds of Africa beyond the reach of all the influences of modern education. Will any one dare to claim that, spending his life under those conditions, he would ever have become the great Emancipator? The question answers itself. Therefore, let not the self-made man boast overmuch of his independence of teachers and schools. The college has educated him as really, though indirectly, as it

has its own graduates. The great educational agencies have produced the very breath of life that he has breathed; the atmosphere of public opinion by which his own ideas have been formed; the literature from which he has drawn his knowledge; the many institutions by which he has been trained; and the friends and associates who have been his teachers. Everything that the self-made man possesses, except his limitations, may quickly be traced back to their real source in the schools which he frequently ridicules.

What is true of the school is also true of the Church. Its influence extends far beyond its walls. The saint outside the Church is no more self-made than the scholar who never attended college. Of course, no intelligent friend of the Church will ever assert that all the noble and beautiful things in human life come exclusively from its services. It has no monopoly of sanctity or righteousness. Human nature itself, and not the Church, is the ultimate source of personal character and general civilization.

But the one fact to be urged at this point is this: The good people who never attend church are after all mightily influenced by it, — their goodness is not wholly their own. Although they may not realize it, the Church has played an important part in producing it. The noble character outside the sanctuary can no more truthfully boast his independence of the Church than the man of wisdom his independence of the college that he has never attended. Both are debtors to an organized life

larger than their own, — a corporate life which has influenced and blessed them in numberless ways.

Many a flower is fertilized and enabled to bear fruit by the bee which brings it pollen from a distant source. So, likewise, many an individual is sanctified and helped to achieve a noble character through the grace brought to him by a neighbor from an altar at which he himself has never worshiped. The voices of the congregation singing "Nearer, my God, to Thee," may never have been heard by this man, but some soul in that company, and thereby lifted into a higher life, resides in the next house and exerts upon him a powerful influence that also lifts him heavenward. The Beatitudes, reverently recited by the worshipers in the meeting-house that stands in the next street, may be unheard by the careless shopkeeper, but he meets them on Monday morning in the faces of his customers who were there, and indirectly the service blesses him. The Church, which he perhaps scorns, by enriching their lives, has also enriched him and his family in ways that are precious, though he may not appreciate them.

This shopkeeper has never heard the minister of the neighboring church preach, and he often contemptuously remarks, "I owe him nothing, for I never attend his meetings." And while it is true that he has never heard the preacher's voice in prayer for light or in pleading for righteousness, nevertheless, in many an hour of sorrow, love and sympathy have fallen upon his heart because the preacher's prayer moved the soul of some neighbor

to be gracious to him; and in many a business transaction the integrity of the earnest Christian, springing from the preacher's plea, has not only blessed him but challenged him to his best. He may not have heard the minister preach, but he owes him very much, for his influence fills the community in which he lives.

The saint outside the Church exclaims, "What good does the Church do me? I never attend its services!" Quite true that he is not a church-attendant, but truer still that he is a constant beneficiary of the Church. It creates and sustains a moral atmosphere which he breathes every day of his life. We might as well say that the mountain does nothing for the man who dwells in the valley, because he has never stood upon its top! But it has uplifted his soul and poured pure air into his lungs! If this man, so indifferent to the Church, had lived in a community composed of people wholly like himself, would he have been the same person? If, as a babe, he had been taken to a pagan village in the heart of Darkest Africa, would he have had a Christian character? He certainly would have shared the fate of Lincoln under like conditions.

Moreover, many a man lives a comparatively good life, not so much from deliberate choice as from the native flow of his blood. The inheritance of goodness, coming from a mother who was trained to piety in the Church, is the real source of his manhood. There are many persons who walk easily along the pathway of a noble life because the

Church long ago imparted a spiritual momentum to a reverent parent. They are like cars that move on the railroad track long after they are detached from the engine. The gliding cars prove that somewhere down the track an engine gave them a vigorous push. So, likewise, somewhere back of the noble character, now detached from the Church, there was the push heavenward by a mother's prayers at the altar of the sanctuary.

But as the detached cars will soon stop, the motive power being withdrawn, so too, the individual detached from the Church will not hand on to his son what he himself received from his pious parents. The close observer of human life at present is often compelled, in sadness, to note this obvious but ominous fact: *The spiritual motives are lessening!* What came down from a religious ancestry as an inheritance that largely explains the character of the saint outside the Church, he is not handing on to his children.

The outlook is not encouraging. This man has done well outside the Church because he has lived on his spiritual inheritance, — the ethical capital accumulated by a pious ancestry. But his own children, as we will everywhere see if we but look carefully about us, will not receive from him any such spiritual endowment. And if this lessening of ethical motive continues when we reach the third generation that has been reared outside the Church, what will be the prospects of civilization? Here we touch momentous facts which awaken serious reflection if not grave alarm. The lack of respect

for laws human and divine among many children at the present time (even children of our so-called *best* families) — their selfishness, irreverence, levity, and untruthfulness — presents an appalling situation. But what else can be expected when homes are so destitute of vital piety and parents so indifferent to the Church?

The dependence of the saints outside the Church upon the religious life which it creates and sustains has certainly been sufficiently demonstrated. But nothing stated in this connection warrants the inference that this indirect influence of the Church is its chief or best contribution to human life. Although it blesses the whole community, the Church blesses most those whose lives are closest to its altar and foremost in its services and sacrifices.

The self-made man is an indirect product of the school, illustrating and proving the worth and efficiency of education. He could never have been what he is, did not these educational agencies exist. The attendants upon them have been his teachers and benefactors. But how much more the school would have done for him if he had been a member of it and enjoyed its direct influence! If the school could do so much for him when educating him indirectly, how much more it could have done for him had he been under its immediate instruction! So even the self-made man shows the value and the necessity of school attendance. If others had not gone to school he himself could never have acquired the knowledge that he possesses.

What is true of the school is also true of the

Church. The fact that many people who never attend church are made better by its general influence does not prove that churchgoing is useless. It proves the opposite to be the truth. If made somewhat better by the general influence of the Church, how much greater would have been the improvement in these saints outside the Church if they had participated directly in its services! The fact that the Church does a man some good when operating upon him at long range warrants the conviction that it would do him much more good if he were intimately associated with its activities. The Church does benefit those who stand at a distance from it, but this benefit is only a fraction of what it bestows upon its constant attendants.

Moreover, the outside saint, living in isolation, is merely a recipient of this general benefit which flows out from the Church. He is not a coworker with God in a large and public way for the maintenance of the good influences that permeate the community and bless all its members. Certainly there is an attitude more manly and more helpful than this. To be an outside saint is better than nothing, but the best position is to be an inside laborer participating in the life of the Church, and helping it to send out in every direction the largest streams of creative spiritual power. Only in this way can a person develop the finest character, and also bestow the greatest blessings upon the whole community.

Is there any one who would abolish schools because they graduate some dunces while they fail to

produce some of our greatest men and women? Does any one, however critical toward modern education, wish that all schools might be blotted out of existence? Would any caustic enemy of the public schools like to live in a community where no school bells call the children to study, discipline, and instruction? These questions answer themselves. And if schools are a necessity to civilization, then every citizen is under the deepest obligation to do all that he possibly can that we may have the very best system of education. The application to the Church is obvious. Is there any one who would think it wise to abolish the Church simply because sinners are to be found inside and saints outside? Who is there who would like to live in a community without churches: no public worship of God, no solemn yet joyous Sabbath assembly, no corporate life in the spirit of Jesus, no spiritual service full of associations of love and intimations of immortality, no minister with watch-care of old and young, no gracious nurture of children in the religious life, no commanding assertion of Golden Rule and Sermon on the Mount, — who wants to strike all this out of the world? No church in town! Who wants to buy property there or live there? And if the Church is a necessity to civilization, then surely every person is under the deepest obligation to use money, influence, and energy to make the Church just as strong, noble, and helpful as possible.

The minister of a New England city, having labored for a score of years for his parish and com-

munity, felt that the work of his life was done. He presented his resignation and prepared to leave the town.

He had been a true "man of God" to his people. He had loved them, taught them, exhorted them, sacrificed for them, and labored with them. He had been a part of their home life in hours of joy and in times of sorrow, always helpful to old and young. He had been a wise friend to the children and an inspiring companion and counselor to young men and women. Many a wayward boy he had inspired with high ideals, and many a thoughtless girl he had led into wisdom's ways. Sins of various sorts he had fearlessly rebuked; but sinners he had most tenderly and successfully brought to repentance. The mother in her perplexity had received from him not only sympathy but efficient guidance. The troubled business man never left his presence without new light on his problems and new grace in his heart. The real sufferers always received from him both spiritual and material help. The truly penitent went from him back to his tasks with the assurance of divine forgiveness. The happiest heart never failed to find itself chastened into a purer joy by his smile and speech.

This minister had been eminently successful both as preacher and as pastor. His outlook upon nature and life was wide and clear. He was profoundly interested in religion, but cant phrases never fell from his lips, and narrow dogmas had no place in his confession of faith, which was simple, human, and vital. His mind opened to the light

on every side, and the sentiments of his generous heart flowed out in a fellowship that knew no bounds narrower than humanity itself.

A man of quiet manner and serene temper who felt the dignity of his calling, but he never assumed a pious tone nor laid claim to clerical authority. His sermons were instructive and inspiring, but his life spoke louder than his words. His prayers were beautiful in phrase and devout in spirit, but the perpetual prayerfulness of his daily conduct was still more impressive. No expression of doubt respecting immortality ever passed his lips, but his character presented a dynamic assurance of heaven more powerful than any argument. His love of Jesus was too deep and sacred for flippant phrases, but all who knew him realized that he lived much with the Master. His faith in God as the Infinite Father was supreme, but the fidelity of his own life was, to many a doubting heart, a revelation that made the Divine Presence an immediate and everlasting reality.

This man the Church had kept before the community for a score of years as its guide, friend, and teacher. When he resigned, the leader of his congregation was asked by an obscure shopkeeper whether it was true that the minister was to leave the city. When told that such was the case, the man expressed great regret, adding, after a moment of silence, "It is too bad. We ought not to lose him; and, poor as I am, I would give a hundred dollars to have him remain with us!"

The minister's friend was deeply touched and

greatly surprised by the remark. He said: "I am pleased but also astonished to hear you speak in this way, for you are not, I believe, a member of our church. Have you often heard him preach?" To this the shopkeeper replied: "No, I am not a member of your parish, and I never heard your minister preach a sermon. In fact, I never spoke to him in my life. But I tell you, sir, I don't want him to leave us. For, whenever he walks by my shop, I say to myself, 'There goes a true man,' and that moment everything good in me feels stronger, and I find that it is then easier for me to live as I ought!"

Here is a beautiful and touching illustration of the powerful and ennobling influence that radiates from the Church throughout the whole community. This shopkeeper was one of the saints outside the Church, but as he frankly confessed, he owed much that was best in himself to the Church that he never visited and to its minister whom he had never heard preach. The position of this man outside the Church was a misfortune to himself and a misfortune to the community, but even in his isolation he felt his indebtedness to organized religion. So true is it that the creative spiritual influence of the Church is commensurate with the length and breadth of human life itself.

XI JESUS AND THE CHURCH

ONE of the most important functions of the Christian Church remains to be mentioned. Its importance as the representative of Jesus of Nazareth is, however, too obvious to need extended consideration. The Church is needed to enshrine, incorporate, and perpetuate the memory and message of this supreme Master of the Spirit.

A great personality needs an organ, institution, or organization to make itself effective among men. A political leader organizes a party to carry into effect in the state his ideals and policies. The teacher with a great message, like a Plato or a Confucius, draws to himself a select body of devoted disciples and imbues them with his spirit that his doctrine may be spread throughout the world. The philanthropist, who is keenly conscious of the miseries of his fellows and anxious to heal the sorrows of the race, forthwith calls to his support a band of helpers, and builds up an association to rescue sufferers from their misfortunes. Truth has to be incorporated and sentiment has to be organized in order that great and permanent results may be accomplished. The workman must have tools, and an organization is an effective tool. A principle becomes most dynamic only when men associate in its behalf.

Now, if the statesman needs a party to win a victory for his principles, a teacher, disciples to convert the world to his ideals, and the philanthropist, an association to reform society, surely a transcendent religious genius like Jesus needs an institution to make his gospel a commanding influence in the lives of men. The spirit of his life must become the animating enthusiasm of a body of devoted followers. They alone can preserve, spread, and incorporate his message. The truth must be made flesh before the weaknesses of the flesh can be cured. The Christian spirit must have an efficient agency with which to work before it can fashion Christian characters.

The character of Jesus can be made a life-giving power among the nations only as it attracts, organizes, and sends forth disciples who live and labor in the spirit of Jesus. His gospel becomes a public dispensation for the redemption of mankind only through the public meetings and services of those who band themselves together to live that gospel and make it prevail on earth.

Therefore, if the influence of Jesus is of any value to the human race, there must be a Church to embody it and make it effective. Jesus can bless the world only as there are Christians between him and the world to succor and help the people of the world by his spirit. There must be a vital and vitalizing medium between the Cross and the sinner before the grace of the former can heal the miseries of the latter. All this is self-evident.

Whatever our individual beliefs about Jesus may

be, it is true that he stands before us historically as the supreme Person in the realm of religion. Whether we look upon him as the realization of human possibility or as the revelation of divine purpose, or as both, it is evident as a matter of common knowledge that he has a historic importance, a religious significance, a moral influence beyond that of any other character in the annals of the world.

The words that Jesus spoke have done more than any other message to comfort and to cheer, to chasten and to refine, to ennoble and to inspire human hearts. His Beatitudes may have no monopoly of truth, but they have refreshed more weary hearts than the sayings of any other teacher. His parables may not exhaust the sources of ethical wisdom, but they have been more fruitful in character-building than the lessons of any other prophet. His Golden Rule may have been anticipated by ancient sages, but no other command has so powerfully swayed the hearts of men.

The stern rebuke of sin from the lips of Jesus still befriends the weak and restrains the cruel and selfish. His tender plea in behalf of the neglected and the forlorn still opens multitudes of hearts in helpful and compassionate services for a world groaning in sorrow. His solemn entreaty that we live as becometh the sons of God is still the moral tonic of all lands. His urgent charge that his friends "disciple all nations" is still the missionary nerve that overspreads the whole earth. Wherever men have tried to live his gospel, there have been

the highway of progress, the gladness that has no sting, the beauty of holiness that never fades, and the peace of God that passeth understanding.

But more than this: The life that Jesus lived has done infinitely more to bless, to cheer, and to chasten the peoples of the earth than the words that he spoke. In fact his message is supremely powerful because of the supreme manhood that lives in and through it. His teachings are not mere words, but symbols dynamic with power because products of a vast personality. The character of Jesus reveals to all peoples the possibilities of human nature and the purposes of divine providence.

The preeminence of Jesus does not lie in the mere fact that he did this or said that, but rather in the general impression of his life as the sublime exhibition of a perfect trust in God and a supreme love of man. He demonstrates what human life ought to be and what it can be. He gives men not only a precept to follow, but a life-motive sufficiently powerful to enable them to put the precept into action. He illustrates the victory of unselfish love, and he creates in us the love that actually serves and sacrifices and conquers. By his purity he shames us out of our wrong-doing, and by his doctrine and practice of forgiveness he encourages us to outgrow our sins. He makes known the heart of God by living wholly unto God, and he thereby warms our hearts to a loving-kindness that creates the kingdom of God. By his example he reveals the way of life; by the winsome and force-

ful influence of his personality he creates in us the earnest desire to enter and the ability to walk securely in the way of eternal life.

This supreme historic Personality, so loving and so lovable, so pure and so purifying, so noble and so ennobling, so inspired and so inspiring, — he surely deserves an organization to preserve and distribute, to conserve and apply, his influence among men. Or, to put the case more accurately, the world needs an *institution* organized by his spirit and filled with his influence in order that men may be instructed in his gospel and trained to citizenship in the kingdom of love which he inaugurated. The necessity is not that we have slavish disciples, blind followers, or mere imitators of Jesus. This he did not ask; this vital Christianity does not imply. The most loyal friend of Jesus admits that there is truth outside his message, while he also admits that the boundless grace of God has many other methods of access to the human soul aside from that of the Cross.

But the world cannot afford to lose "one accent of the Holy Ghost," much less the powerful plea for love and purity spoken by Jesus. An organization is needed to repeat continuously to all men this message of good-will. The world cannot afford to lose the light of a single star, much less the morning burst of sunshine that broke over Galilee and made a new day for humanity. A storage-battery is needed to conserve this spirituality and so distribute it that the erring sons of God may walk in the light of an eternal hope. The world

cannot afford to lose the holy and heroic impulse of any great heart, much less the heart-throb of One who seemed to come out of the heart of God and who touched with marvelous power the hearts of men beyond the measure of any other member of our race. And a special institution is surely needed to provide a method by which this personal impulse may be brought to bear upon human souls and by which human beings may be trained to service under the authority of an equal love.

The Christian Church was created to carry forward the important tasks just described. The wonderful life that Jesus lived, and the infinite value of that life to the world, made such a society as the Church a supreme necessity. The very instincts of humanity insisted that the sublime life of Jesus must not be lost to the world. Here was an example so precious that he must be kept prominently before all peoples. Here was a character so gloriously beautiful with the beauty of holiness that he must be made a perpetual and purifying Presence in the affairs of the world. Here was a gracious and glorious life, so capable of reforming sinners and making saints that he must be evermore kept close to men, not only to show them the path of duty, but to lead them in the way of salvation. To do all this, the Church came into existence. An institution was needed to preserve and perpetuate the power of Jesus in human society.

The importance of the Church consists largely in the fact that it brings us into vital and vitalizing contact with the world's greatest religious genius,

with the divinest character in human history. And the Church, by associating us with Jesus of Nazareth, — by instructing us in his gospel, by imbuing us with his spirit, and by filling us with his love, — in these ways provides us with a most valuable life-training — a training in self-mastery and in loving service that everywhere proves itself of inestimable worth, but that is nowhere else given with equal power and fruitfulness. This organization may well be called the "Church of God," because it associates us with a Prophet of the Soul, who, more than any one else, makes us realize that we are the children of God, and who also does more than any one else to lead us to treat each other as it becometh the members of the family of God to act toward one another.

By common consent an appropriate and public place is provided as the home of the great painting of the master artist. It needs to be preserved as a public treasure, and it also needs to be made accessible to all persons. The whole community ought to have the privilege of studying the masterpiece, and every individual ought often to feast his eyes upon its beauty and put himself under the influence of its precious lessons. The sublime creations of art are not private but public; they are a part of our *commonwealth*, and they serve to educate us in piety and civility.

In Jesus we have something more than a picture, — we have a divine Person. Not the pictorial representation of things beautiful in nature, but a realization of spiritual beauty that constitutes the

divine Life. Not a masterpiece of art that portrays face or landscape, but an embodiment of goodness in which the creative love of God is present. Not the symbolic interpretation of sunsets that have faded and forms that have vanished, but the incarnation in human character of spiritual principles that are eternal in the providence of God and necessary in the conduct of man.

If the picture deserves a museum in order that its beauty may become a public blessing, surely Jesus deserves an institution such as the Church, in order that the beauty and glory of his life may permanently bless the world. And if it is a valuable part of our education to go to the great picture-gallery and study the masterpiece, surely it is a vastly more valuable part of our moral and religious training to commune with that supreme Life whose gospel reveals the way of salvation and whose ministry conveys the grace of God.

What has been said of the great painting is equally true of the great musical creation. It is needful that the melody of the world's supreme voices shall enter into the life of mankind. They must be made a public blessing. Music is one of our most important educators. It stirs the very depths of human nature; it lifts to the very heights of human felicity. By a true instinct, religion uses music as its chief means of expressing and cultivating the sentiments of piety. It represents the angels of heaven as perpetually singing. It describes the Gloria in Excelsis as floating down to earth on the wings of song. The mystic yearnings

of the loving heart find their only adequate interpreter in the voice of music. So important is the ministry of music that private or public generosity provides a local habitation for our great singers. The concert is an institution that measures the progress of civilization and distributes innumerable joys.

Now, shall we provide a stage for the singer who, for a moment, charms the ear, and fail to erect a pulpit from which the prophecy of Jesus shall constantly sound forth to chasten and gladden the heart? His is a voice that brings heavenly melody from the Spirit of God to the spirit of man! Shall we have the conservatory as an institution which incorporates the musical genius of the race, preserving, cultivating, and distributing it, and fail to provide a Church as an institution which shall incorporate the greatest spiritual genius among men, whose ministry provides, not simply esthetic satisfactions for the passing hour, but the ideals and motives of an immortal life?

Shall we, in our conduct toward music, act upon the sensible theory that the great singer has a blessing for us that we cannot afford to miss, and that, if we develop our capacity for the appreciation of music, we must put ourselves often in touch with the masters of song; and shall we, at the same time, ignoring the fact that we are the children of the Most High, pay no heed to the Master of the Spirit whose words convey a melody of life that brings us into harmony with God? We do not expect to become musical unless we put ourselves

under the influence of the musical institution that holds in trust the musical achievements of humanity, but we act as though our moral and spiritual nature needs no help from the spiritual institution that incorporates the message and ministry of the world's greatest religious Teacher! Can it be that the world of musical sounds is more important than the realm of ethical services?

If the concert stage is needed to make the people familiar with oratorio and symphony, certainly the Church is needed to proclaim the Beatitudes and incarnate them in life. They contain a music more valuable than that of any opera. The Church is needed to send forth with power the clarion commands of the Sermon on the Mount, calling all men to repentance, to growth, and to service. They go deeper and lift higher than the melody of any singer. The Church is needed to associate all men intimately and continuously with Jesus of Nazareth, in order that his personal influence, one of the most powerful forces in behalf of righteousness that has ever entered human society, may move their hearts and mold their lives. No symphony can convey lessons of life so precious.

All wise parents realize that it is of great importance to their children to keep them in a musical atmosphere. With good reason, they say, "I want my child to hear the best music, the productions of the great masters of the tone-world; it is a life-preparation of the most precious character, for it opens sources of infinite enjoyment." Very true! But what about that *ethical world* that relates to

conduct and destiny, to service and salvation? Is not growth in goodness as important as appreciation of beautiful music? If it is a valuable part of the child's education to hear the great singer, is it not a more valuable part of his training to hear the message of Jesus that provides strength for hours of temptation and comfort for times of sorrow? If there is need for a musical atmosphere for the child, the need is certainly much greater for the religious atmosphere of the Church, from which the young heart may appropriate the spirit of Jesus and grow noble by association with the noblest character in human history.

It needs the machinery of a power-house to transform the momentum of the rushing river into electric energies that are distributed far and wide to light up the earth and to do the world's work. The Church is such a power-house (an illustration that has become a commonplace figure), where the spiritual momentum of Jesus' personality, sweeping like a vast river of the water of life through the centuries, is brought to bear upon all sorts and conditions of men, furnishing in this way much of the motive power that operates the machinery of civilization.

In the sanctuary, vital connection is established between this supreme Character and the human soul. The greatest personal influence in the world is brought to bear upon the weakest human being to help him to realize his spiritual possibilities. The electric impulse of a sublime Life is imparted to the individual, not to shut out God,

but to make the individual realize the life of God in himself.

But far beyond this: We have in the Christian Church vastly more than the influence of Jesus, precious and powerful as that is. Around him have gathered, from century to century, multitudes of disciples who have responded to his call and become imbued with his spirit. All these lives have added their contributions to the great tide of ethical power that resides in and operates through the Church. It holds in trust not only the person of Jesus, but "the communion of saints."

The Church grows larger and grander as it sweeps through the ages, becoming constantly richer and stronger. Every lowly heart in its fellowship, every earnest worker, every saintly soul, every brave missionary, every mighty prophet, every wise scholar, every stalwart reformer, — all those who loyally bear the Cross, — leave behind in the Church of God some contribution that increases its capacity to heal and to bless the souls of men. Therefore association with the Church means not only companionship with Jesus, but also the helpfulness of thousands whose memories and hopes, conserved in the corporate life of the congregation, operate, like electric impulses, through its symbols and services.

Is it some one groping in darkness that seeks the Church? Forthwith the light shines and the way ahead to safety and God is clear! When brought into the larger life of the congregation, its abundant cheer and hope make the desolate strong. Is

it some one overborne with burdens and unable to climb the steep and stony pathway? Forthwith the needed motive streams in from the Cross: "If Jesus could conquer there, I can overcome this!" Is it some one beset by a temptation that seems irresistible? Forthwith a commanding voice speaks out of Galilee, and straightway the heart is braced to resist successfully every onset of Evil! Is it some one far off like the prodigal, with stained hands and a wasted life? Forthwith from the pulpit sounds the Master's plea for repentance, and the entreaty of that great Soul penetrates this heart and new energies come into it to start the bleeding feet heavenward!

The Church administers life to those in need, because the servant of One whose life abounded in love. The love which his heart felt and the love which our hearts need is the measure of what the Church is worth to humanity.

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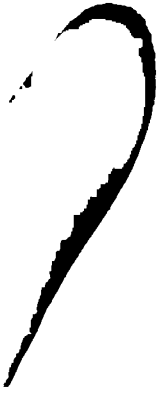

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